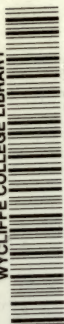


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THE EXCHANGED CROWNS

ALFRED ROWLAND, D.D., LL.B., B.A.

"PREACHERS OF TO-DAY"

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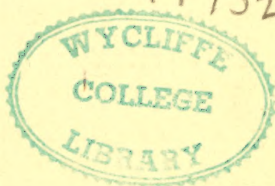
BY

ALFRED ROWLAND, D.D., LL.B., B.A.

AUTHOR OF

"HALF-HOURS WITH TEACHERS" "PAUL'S FIRST LETTER TO TIMOTHY"

"THE BURDENS OF LIFE" "AFTER DEATH—WHAT?" ETC.



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TO
MY FRIENDS AND FELLOW-WORKERS
THE DEACONS
OF PARK CHAPEL, CROUCH END
WHETHER ON THIS SIDE, OR ON THAT SIDE THE VEIL
WHOSE LOVE AND LOYALTY HAVE NEVER FAILED
ME DURING A PASTORATE EXTENDING OVER
THIRTY-FIVE YEARS

FOREWORD

THESE sermons were preached in the ordinary course of my ministry, and are now published in the hope of wider usefulness. They do not deal with theological or ecclesiastical problems, but with various phases of Christian experience. Although they are independent of each other, they have been arranged with some regard to orderly sequence, so that this book may have unity.

We begin with an acknowledgment that all the gifts and graces with which we are crowned are from God, and that any recompense for serving Him, whether here or hereafter, is due to His boundless generosity. This is followed by a delineation of some of the graces which accompany the development of the spiritual life, and constitute the true test of character. Our daily associations, in which the sacred and the secular are blended, provide for their cultivation and display in the sweetness of home, and amid the temptations of business, however lowly our lot may be. Then, looking beyond ourselves, we

think of the claims of friendship and of human brotherhood, and of our responsibilities in regard to our Colonies and to heathen peoples. We close with the reflection that God's giving to us will always transcend our giving to Him.

Each Sermon is introduced not only by a text, but by a quotation from some writer, whose words were inspired by the Spirit Who leads into all truth. Indeed, for much that is best in the following pages I acknowledge my indebtedness to others, and especially to Rev. Samuel Cox, at one time editor of the *Expositor*, who while living ministered to a small congregation, but now addresses great multitudes through preachers of all denominations. "He being dead, yet speaketh."

ALFRED ROWLAND.

SELWOOD,
CROUCH END, N.

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THE EXCHANGED CROWNS

I

THE EXCHANGED CROWNS

“Hast thou beneath another’s stern control
Bent thy sad soul,
And wasted sacred hopes and precious tears?
Yet calm thy fears!
For thou canst gain, even from the bitterest part,
A stronger heart.

Hast thou found life a cheat, and worn in vain
Its iron chain?
Has thy soul bent beneath its heavy bond?—
Look thou beyond!
If life is bitter, *there* forever shine
Hopes more divine.”

A. PROCTER.

“They cast their crowns before the throne . . .
I will give thee a crown of life.”—REV. iv. 10, ii. 10.

THIS is the language of an Oriental Seer,
inspired indeed as to the truth latent in
it, but to be interpreted in the light of his times
and training. In the fourth chapter he turns from

the present condition of the Church, as represented by the seven churches in Asia, to its future. He beholds it as a ransomed community, purified and triumphant—appearing to him, in vision, as twenty-four elders sitting clothed in white raiment, and having on their heads crowns of gold. He sees also Nature typified by four living ones (unhappily rendered “four beasts” in our version), and these give “glory and honour and thanks to Him that sat on the throne, and liveth for ever and ever.” And as they do so, the four-and-twenty elders (the redeemed) fall down and worship, and “cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created.” The number twenty-four doubtless designates the completeness and unity of the Church—in its double aspect (the Old Testament and New Testament)—represented by twelve patriarchs and twelve apostles.

This language is picturesque, and appears to us fanciful, but it deserves serious consideration, because it enshrines abiding truth, namely, that, in the future, all the redeemed will recognise in God the source of all they possess and enjoy, and will feel it their joyful privilege to cast their crowns before Him, knowing that they

belong to Him rather than to themselves. We sometimes sing too trippingly and thoughtlessly those solemn words of adoration—

“ Holy, Holy, Holy ! all the saints adore Thee,
Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy
 sea ;
Cherubim and seraphim falling down before Thee,
Which wert, and art, and evermore shalt be.”

But how seldom we think that in this adoration we ourselves may share ; and that what seems to us visionary is only a poetical way of setting forth a glorious privilege, which we shall enjoy there if we begin it here. For heaven is the consummation and development of what is best in us on earth. The future is wrapped up in the present. If, even here, we see development such as Darwin taught us to believe is affecting us physically and mentally, so when all processes are hastened, as they will be when the hindrances of our mortal flesh are left behind, we shall find our spirits enfranchised and ennobled, that we may carry out on broader lines the service of God which we feebly began here.

Already some of us have been taught to ascribe to God the praise for anything good found in us, or wrought by us—in other words, we are learning, even now, to cast our crowns before His throne.

This is the very opposite of the spirit and temper rebuked so often in Scripture, though common still amongst the worldly. Moses warned the people against the temptations which would assail them when they exchanged the hardship of the wilderness for the ease of Canaan, saying, "Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God . . . lest when thou hast eaten, and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein, and when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied, then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, and thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth." This was the sin of Nebuchadnezzar when he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon, and said, "Is not this great Babylon that I have builded for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" The lesson of human dependence, the acknowledgment of Divine rule, the dethronement of self, and the enthronement of God,—this is what every one has to learn, if he would find rest in the heavenly Kingdom, and ennoblement in the consecration of his powers. And it is this which is set forth in the vision of the inspired seer, who saw the four-and-twenty elders casting their crowns before the throne,

saying, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power : for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created."

The crowns spoken of in this passage I take to be symbols of any greatness, or honour, or enrichment we may enjoy, which we ought to recognise has its source in God rather than in ourselves.

But I have ventured to couple with this phrase another, which represents the enthroned Christ as saying to each of His faithful ones, "I will give thee a crown of life." For this suggests to me the idea of *exchanged crowns*. On the one hand, we give to Him our crowns of honour ; on the other hand, He gives to us the crown of life. Or shall I put it thus?—the full recognition of God as the source of all we enjoy is accompanied by a fuller and more abundant life in ourselves. He that humbles himself is exalted. We give up all, but receive still more abundantly. And this, which is begun in our experience here, will have its consummation in the future life, of which we are sure, because we are consciously greater than the material world. As Browning says—

"I know this earth is not my sphere ;
For I cannot so narrow me, but that
I still exceed it."

6 THE EXCHANGED CROWNS

I

In developing this thought, I will first suggest to you some of the "crowns" we should cast before the throne. What is it that men seek with all the ardour of a competitor in the Grecian games?

1. In our own age and country wealth is probably the most prominent. Many, indeed, have no hope of it, and would be well content if only they could earn an honest livelihood; but some find money flowing in upon them faster than they once expected it to do. Beginning in a lowly position, blessed only with a slight education, they are succeeding in the world, and rise from rung to rung on the social ladder, all its rungs being made of gold. This uplift will do them no serious harm if their acknowledgment of Divine claims goes with them all the time; not only as a theory, but as an experience. And we have known men of whom that was true. When the small salary has been followed by a large income, their contributions to good causes have advanced too. Their shillings are now sovereigns, their five-pound notes are increased to hundreds, and even to thousands. And this is not the result of a spasm of pity, or an impulse of generosity, but is a serious, well-considered acknowledgment of God's goodness in giving them the capacity, and the

opportunity they have diligently used ; for it is He Who “gives them power to get wealth,” as they frankly and reverently acknowledge. Therefore their gifts are like the tithes of God’s ancient people, proportionate to income, or like the “first-fruits,” which were an acknowledgment not that they only were God’s, but that all the harvest so represented was His. They mean what they say, or sing—

“Take my silver and my gold,
Not a mite would I withhold ;”

for if God asks it they will give it up ; and already they are learning to do what the elders did when they cast their crowns before the throne.

2. The same may be said of honour or of reputation. This comes to some men without any seeking on their own part. Some are born to it. They are of noble birth, of illustrious parentage, and naturally step into the position of leaders in society or in statesmanship. And others who seem to win it by their talents are none the less called on to acknowledge that those talents which distinguish them from others are (as we properly say) “gifts”—gifts of God, for whose use they are responsible to Him. Too often this is not recognised, nor the responsibility which accompanies it. But surely some of those so endowed might do much as leaders of society to frown down what

is vicious though fashionable, and purify what are called the "higher classes" of luxury and extravagance and impurity. While those whose honour it is to serve their country, as magistrates, statesmen, and officials, may hasten the coming Kingdom of our Lord by using their position to lessen temptations to drunkenness and incitements to war. Their crowns are to be cast before the throne.

3. We may apply this also to many a crown of thorns which the followers of our Lord may be called upon to wear. What we are apt to resent sometimes proves a source of blessing. We do not live in the days of the old dispensation when men imagined that worldly prosperity was an evidence of Divine favour. The great question which is discussed so dramatically in the Book of Job has had new light cast upon it by the fact that the well-beloved Son in whom the Father was well pleased was Himself a sufferer. For us He wore the crown of thorns, that in His sympathy we might find comfort, and in His example of patience and trust might have inspiration. It was a lesson often taught in medieval days, when knowledge was in some respects less accurate than now, but when faith was sometimes more vivid. One old legend tells us of a monk who found the crown of thorns his Saviour wore, and placed it

on the altar in the Chapel on Good Friday, that he and his brethren might gaze on it with awe and grief. Early on Easter morn he went to remove the dreadful relic, feeling that it would be out of harmony with the bright thoughts of Easter Day. But when he entered he found the whole place filled with wondrous perfume, and the early sunshine was glorifying the altar where lay the crown of thorns; but lo! the thorns had burst into blossoms rare, sweet, and lovely. Is not the legend an enshrinement of truth which sufferers have often held fast and thanked God for?—their pain, or their bereavement, or their apparent failure, has blossomed into unworldliness, and patience, and self-control, and deepening trust in God. Paul, one of the chief of these, said in their name, "We glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us." In other words, the crown of thorns may blossom into a crown of virtues, and in trustful gratitude should be cast before the throne.

4. Success in service for God and for one's fellows is another crown within our reach, though many of us fail to win it or even strive for it.

The self-centred and self-indulgent Christian must be a perpetual problem to the holy angels, who serve God day and night. Professing to be saved from sin, he has no word of cheer and hope for sinners whom he meets every day of his life; professing that he is following the Christ, he never asks others to walk with him; professing that he is journeying to a land of eternal felicity, he fails to let even his own children know about his sublime expectation. Do we believe what we profess? Are we content to go to heaven alone, without the hope of meeting one redeemed spirit who will be able to say, "I am here (blessed be God!) through what *you* said"? Happy by contrast will those be who, in some sphere of Christian activity, have taught children the fear of God—or have been so gracious and kind that in them others have seen the likeness of the Lord and have learned to love Him. Let this be your portion, for it may be. Look through the various possibilities of service presented by the Church you belong to, and ask as Saul did, "Lord, what wilt Thou have *me* to do?" Fight against some evil; be it drunkenness, ignorance, or profligacy. Seek some neighbours for whom you may do what Jesus of Nazareth would have done, for He healed the sick, and fed the hungry, and consoled the mourners, and made little children happy. Learn the lesson

THE EXCHANGED CROWNS 11

taught by the motto on Rabbi Nathan's tomb, in lines which were written by himself—

“Hope not the cure of Sin till Self is dead ;
Forget it in love's service, and the debt
Thou canst not pay, the angels shall forget ;
Heaven's gate is shut to him who comes alone ;
Save thou a soul, and it shall save thy own.”

Be content with nothing short of that salvation, for “they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.” Pray for the conversion of every one you try to influence for good, that all may turn their faces heavenward and Godward, and that you may think of them here, and may meet them hereafter, in the spirit of the great apostle who said to the Thessalonians, “For what is our hope or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?—For ye are our glory and joy.”

And that crown of rejoicing you will gladly cast before His throne.

II

And now I ask you to think of that crown of life which the Lord will give us in that day. The truth seems to me to be this, that while we ascribe all our honours to Him, He will increase and ennoble the spiritual life that is in

us. "Life" in the Bible means more than existence. To continue to be, would be a curse rather than a blessing, if it was accompanied by remorse, or by pain, or by misery. When Aurora granted the gift of immortality to Tithonus, who had forgotten to ask for youth and vigour, the burden of life became insupportable to him—"immortal age beside immortal youth," as Tennyson put it. Therefore Tithonus besought the goddess for the happy release of death—

"Let me go : take back thy gift ;
Why should a man desire in any way
To vary from the kindly race of men ?

Of happy men that have the power to die."

Depend upon it, the crown of life which our Lord promises is something infinitely more than continued existence. It involves fulness and exuberance of spiritual vitality, enlargement of possibility in the direction both of joy and of service, development and ennoblement of character, in which the life of Christ Himself will be manifest.

We who are parents live again in our children—we think with them and sometimes we act through them—and in a deeper, truer sense Christ will live in us as already He has begun to do, so that our thoughts, our activities, our lives will be wholly and eternally His.

The future is wrapped up in the present. Heaven will be the outcome of character, and what we see of development from lower to higher forms of life here is but a feeble foretaste of development there.

This "crown of life," which every good and faithful servant may look for, is not some outward honour separable from character, and independent of it. Rather is it like the crown of the white lily, which is the outcome of its own life, sure to come because it lives in wholesome air and heavenly sunshine. It grows mysteriously but mightily—so that in spite of the earth's attraction, it confidently pushes its way upward through the dark soil, and above it. The stem rises, the leaf unfolds, the flower develops—for the life in it is "life," and is of God.

That is one of the many parables of nature. For so the soul may live above all earthliness, may put forth delicate graces and virtues, shaping into the image of Jesus Christ its type, till at last it appears glorious as the "crown of life."

What the possibilities of that life may be we do not know; but we are sure that He Who adapts its environment to every lowly plant will adapt its environment to every redeemed soul; and that opportunities for service will be such that we shall use every one of them with exultant delight.

14 THE EXCHANGED CROWNS

Therefore I give you, and I will take home to
myself, the cheery message of Lewis Morris—

“Live on ! brave lives, chained to the narrow round
Of duty !—Live ! expend yourselves and make
The orb of Being wheel onward steadfastly
 Upon its path.
The Lord of life alone
Knows to what goal of good ;
Work on ! live on !”

till you too join with those who cast their crowns
before His throne.

II

LIFE'S DEVELOPMENT

“Progress is
The law of Life :—man is not Man yet.”
BROWNING.

“Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual.”—
I COR. xv. 46.

IT is noteworthy that in the Hebrew Scriptures there is scarcely a hint of any belief in a resurrection. The familiar verse from Job, so often read in the burial service, had not the meaning which Christians now attach to it, but referred only to the coming of a vindicator of justice and right, a living Redeemer who would justify a maligned man. Even the later prophets, Daniel and Ezekiel, give only faint suggestions of the future life. Yet when our Lord came some such expectations prevailed, though tinged with sensuous notions, which He earnestly sought to banish. The Sadducees alone among the Jews of His day denied both resurrection and im-

mortality, but our Lord maintained the popular belief, developed and purified it, and based it on a sure foundation, for He built it on His own empty grave. By His resurrection He gave the world the first indubitable evidence of the truth we rejoice in, so that when we depict on Easter cards, as we sometimes do, flowers of hope clustering round a cross, we suggest what is true as well as beautiful.

I

The doctrine of the resurrection is based, not on philosophic speculations, but on historic fact, and the doctrine is nowhere so fully set forth as in this wonderful and familiar chapter. There was need for it. Among the diversified and contradictory opinions held in the Corinthian Church was this—that a resurrection was incredible. Whether this arose from Sadducean teaching, or from Gentile philosophy, whether it included disbelief also in personal immortality, we do not know. But Paul showed remarkable wisdom and patience in dealing with this heresy. He did not excommunicate the heretics, as some modern Christians would be inclined to do, but he taught them the way of God more perfectly. In teaching them, however, he does not attempt to give a full explanation of the mode or nature of

resurrection, but simply tries to convince the objector, and to confirm the faith of the believer by answering the question he himself had once addressed to Agrippa, "Why should it be thought a thing *incredible* with you that God should raise the dead?" With this purpose in view he refers to occurrences in nature which are not less mysterious than a resurrection, which, if merely foretold and not actually seen, would not seem less incredible, and he suggests the question, "If God can do this, and does do it, in lower spheres and for inferior forms of life, why can He not in the higher?" It is the same kind of argument which the poet Young uses in the lines—

"The world of matter with its various forms,
All dies into new life. . . .

Can it be?

Matter immortal! and shall spirit die?
Above the nobler, shall less noble rise?
Shall man alone, for whom all things revive,
No resurrection know? Shall man alone,
Imperial man, be sown in barren ground,
Less privileged than grain on which he feeds?
Still seems it strange that thou shouldst live for ever?
Is it less strange that thou shouldst live at all?
This is a miracle, and that no more!
Who gave beginning can exclude an end."

But the Christian argument for our resurrection rests not on analogy, but on the fact of the Lord's resurrection. He was the "first-fruits" of them

that sleep, and to any Jew that word first-fruits would have special significance. Every Jew had been accustomed to present the first-fruits of field and garden in the Temple, and when he presented them, or had them presented, he recognised in them pledges of what was unseen—fruit and corn in distant orchards and fields. Such then, says Paul, is the relation of Christ's resurrection to ours, its promise and pledge.

But Paul does not rely on that fact only for his knowledge of the future and the unseen. He speaks with the confidence and authority of a man to whom a revelation had been given by the Spirit of God, who, as Jesus said, could lead into all truth. Elsewhere Paul tells us that he had been once uplifted above his ordinary experiences, and had seen what he could not ordinarily see, and what we have never seen. He beheld what we cannot behold, just as one on a mountain peak discerns the light of dawn while those lingering amid the mists of the valley below are still in darkness. It is a saint who was once caught up to the third heavens to see, and hear things unspeakable, who speaks to us here. Therefore he speaks with the authority of one who has enjoyed a revelation, and who is not on the same level with one who merely speculates about the future.

In this chapter the apostle alludes to what he calls the natural body, that is, of course, our physical frame. Nothing could be more admirably adapted to our present environment than the body of our flesh. Whether we wish to receive impressions from the outer world, or to make impressions on it, our senses enable us to do it with ease. Well, just as it is exquisitely fitted for the life that now is, so we are assured the spiritual body of the future will be exactly what is needed in a spiritual sphere, whether to drink in enjoyment or to exercise capacity. When death came through the first Adam, who was a "living soul," his body, which was associated with this world, having fulfilled its function, dissolved into its natural elements; but the second Adam is a quickening spirit, who enjoys and inspires new life, which will be clothed, as He Himself was, with a spiritual body over which death will have no power. "Howbeit," he adds, "that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual."

"We shall be like our Lord,
Our nature all restored
In Him Who is our Head,
The first-born from the dead.
By Him to glory led;
The same, yet changed."

Now it is clear that Paul had no fear of death, nor shall we have any fear so long as we accept the assurances he was able to give us, who was in vital contact with the Lord of life and glory. A man may naturally tremble who looks over the precipitous cliffs of Niagara below the falls, and sees the seething cauldron, and hears the roar of the thundering waters, but it is possible and even natural to lose that sense of terror when he gazes across to signs of life and scenes of beauty on the other side, and knows how easily he can cross the bridge, and stand on soil as firm on that side as the soil on which he is standing on this side. If we had but Paul's faith, his keen perception of spiritual realities, we should feel absolutely confident that death does not quench life, but develops it. Our thoughts would not dwell on the dissolution of loving ties, so much as on the reuniting of them. The grave would not be an exit from the stage of conscious action, but an entrance to a larger stage. Death would neither be a negation of life, nor a contrast to it, but an event in the course of it. We should feel certain that our affections would not fade, nor be perverted, and that our powers would be unfettered, not crippled, because while here we share what is natural and transient, and there we shall share what is spiritual

and eternal, after the type of our risen and triumphant Lord.

But the apostle points us beyond what takes place at death, to what will be experienced after death. It is but a hint, yet the hint is unmistakable. The ransomed spirit passes at once into a state of felicity, but will subsequently be clothed with a glorified body like that of the risen Christ, and this will bring with it possibilities of heightened bliss and nobler service.

This change Paul illustrates by the analogy which our Lord used when He reminded us that when an ear of wheat falls into the ground it dies, and must do so, if it would fulfil its destiny and bear fruit. The seed perishes absolutely (and so does the natural body), but life comes forth as the result of that death, and we see evidence of that in every field ripe to the harvest. This life in the harvest is not an exact repetition of the same seed that we sowed, but is far more beautiful, more glorious, and more productive. If, then, God can give that seed its "own body"—a new one, and a better one—we may be sure that He will provide for each one of His children a spiritual body, which will far more than take the place of the body we leave behind, for the body is only the husk of the seed, or, as the apostle calls it elsewhere, the tent of the traveller.

It seems to me most clearly asserted that the body of the future will not be the body we lay in the grave—for Paul takes pains to show how all the various kinds of creatures have bodies appropriate to them. He suggests that the physical body of man is different from that of beast or fish, because his requirements are different; and similarly the spiritual body will be exactly adapted to the loftier sphere we shall hereafter fill. "Howbeit that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterwards (no one knows how long afterwards) that which is spiritual." And in view of this Paul urges on us all this consideration, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

II

But my text may also be regarded as the assertion of a general law which prevails in the whole economy of God, for it is not only in the unseen future that the natural precedes the spiritual. In all God's dealings with men we see progressiveness and development, for He is ever pressing forward towards His own ideals, which men cannot mar nor demons destroy.

1. You may see a suggestion of this Divine order if you turn to the Book of Genesis, which, though it does not profess to give a literal account of creation as some imagine, gives us a series of pictures which suggest the Divine principles of order which underlay creation. There we read how Jehovah first created the material world—the earth and sea, the grass and trees; and passing onward through the creation of various forms of life, at last man appeared in the image of God, with intelligence and will, fitting him to exercise dominion over all around him. The same progressiveness is suggested in the account of the creation of man himself; first the development of the body, then of the mind; for it was after he had been formed of “the dust of the ground” (the elements found in the physical world) that God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became “a living soul,” something higher and nobler than what was around him. Even Darwinism would not have much to quarrel with over that phraseology, however much it may be contradicted by the ecclesiastical interpretation sometimes imposed on it.

2. Turn now from ancient records to modern experience, and you see the law in my text constantly asserting itself. The first lessons a child learns are associated with the “natural” world.

His hunger craves food, his weariness longs for rest. His earliest cries and efforts are after what is purely physical, and having it, he is satisfied. But soon the faculties of the mind and soul awake, though even their tendencies at first are to what is lower, and the object of discipline and training is towards the subordination of what is animal, and the development of what is mental and spiritual, so that energies expended in mischief and play become gradually concentrated on the acquirement of knowledge and the formation of character. In other words, there is first that which is natural, and afterwards that which is spiritual.

3. This truth is applicable also to the revelations of God's will, which have always been progressive.

(i) The world was very gradually prepared for the manifestation of God in Jesus Christ. It was after long waiting that the spiritual followed the natural. In the earlier centuries simple lessons of dependence on God were taught. By the limitations of human power, and the interposition of Divine power, this lesson was enforced: "Without Me ye can do nothing." Still more clearly the patriarchs heard this truth, and by rewards, like Canaan, which were typical of the higher, they were helped heavenward. Then the Mosaic economy proclaimed the penalty of sin, the separation caused by it between God and man, and the

necessity for a Mediator. Still clearer views were granted to the prophets, and at last Christ appeared so that His disciples saw what prophets and kings had failed to see, that God is love, and he who dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him.

(ii) If you contrast those two dispensations you will see their progressiveness yet more clearly. Christianity was to Judaism what manhood is to youth. Judaism was represented by tutors who were constantly finding fault and making rules ; but Christianity proclaimed liberty to all the sons of God. As you teach children by pictures and stories before they can read for themselves, so the Jews were taught by sacrifices and ablutions which could not make the comers thereunto perfect. But when Christ came He revealed the principles which underlay the former precepts, He proclaimed the eternal truths which were hidden in ancient forms, and He foretold the removal of the Temple, because the hour had come when neither in Jerusalem nor Samaria would exclusive places for worship be found, for (as He said) God is a Spirit, present everywhere, and to be worshipped anywhere by those who worship in spirit and in truth.

(iii) And that dispensation became still higher when Christ disappeared as a human teacher, and became known and trusted as the exalted King of His people, ruling them and guiding them by His

Spirit into all truth. Even in Christianity there was first the natural, then the spiritual, and this revelation is still growing, for the Lord hath yet more light and truth to break forth from His word.

“Learn the lesson of progression duly,
Do not call each glorious change decay ;
But know we only hold our treasures truly
When it seems as if they pass'd away !
Nor dare to blame God's gifts for incompleteness,
In that their beauty lies ; they roll
Towards some infinite depth of love and sweetness,
Bearing onward man's reluctant soul.”

“Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual.”

III

In conclusion, let me ask how far is this text true of your experience? In God's great goodness most of you have had what is “natural,” in the way of religious advantage and privilege. Physical strength, mental training, home guardianship, religious teaching, helps, ministries, diversities of gifts ; all these have been yours, and are still. But what of the spiritual? Has that been quickened within you? Are you consciously living amid unseen realities? Is communion with God the atmosphere of your soul? Have you not fallen

short of this? Has there not been a pause in your development? While the body is vigorous and the mind alert, is not the soul dead to the things of God? There has been in you the natural, what of the spiritual? If this has not been aroused to consciousness, so far as the chief end of life is concerned, you have failed and come short of the glory of God. And just as a father would weep over his child whose limbs were perfect and whose growth was normal, if he showed no sign of intelligence, made no response to a smile, and gave no promise of mental capacity, so our Heavenly Father must be grieved if in you there is no sign of recognising Him, no realisation of His love, no consciousness of His nearness. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto you, Ye must be born again."

But thank God this is the day of resurrection, the day on which hope dawns on the world, and on which new life is awaiting you if you will have it. The very desire after spiritual life is the beginning of life, begotten of the Spirit. The prayer which is a cry for life is the first breath of life; and therefore pray with confidence and hope for the Spirit of God to transform you.

“Breathe on me, Breath of God ;
Fill me with life anew,
That I may love what Thou dost love
And do what Thou wouldst do.

Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Until my heart is pure,
Until with Thee I will one will
To do and to endure !

Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Till I am wholly Thine,
Till all this earthly part of me
Glow with Thy fire Divine !

Breathe on me, Breath of God ;
So shall I never die,
But live with Thee the perfect life
Of Thine eternity.”

May we who have enjoyed what is natural, share
with Christ what is spiritual and eternal !

III

THE THREE GRACES

“Two of these triple lights shall once grow pale—
They burn without, but Love, within the veil.”

TRENCH.

“And now abideth Faith, Hope, Charity, these three ; but the greatest of these is Charity.”—1 COR. xiii. 13.

A FEW weeks ago I had occasion to visit the town of Hailsham. My companion was a county magistrate, and while he was on the bench I strolled through the town, noting the contrast between the slow-moving farmers and rustics, and the eager, swift crowds which throng our streets and stations. It was market-day, and after watching the patient sheep and cattle on sale, and being worried by the raucous voices of the salesmen, I turned for refreshment and quiet into the old parish church. There I sat alone, and bethought me of those who had built it centuries before, and of generations of worshippers who, I trust, had there found, full often, inspiration and comfort. I turned my eyes on a fine memorial

window, through which the light was streaming, which had been erected to the memory of a townsman who, in the judgment of those who knew him, had exemplified these three graces—"faith, hope, and charity." In each of the three lights was a symbolic representation of one of these virtues, so highly commended by Paul, and so gloriously exemplified in his Lord and Master, who is also ours. On the left was Faith, a beautiful figure leaning on the cross, in which we also find support and rest; on the right was Hope, with the anchor, which enters into that which is within the veil; and in the centre stood Charity, a gracious, womanly figure, holding two little children by the hand. For charity was rightly placed in the middle, supported, as it ever must be, on the one side by faith in God, and on the other by hope in humanity.

Very beautiful the window looked that morning, and as I gazed on it, I forgot for a time the noise of the market, the chaffering of buyers and sellers, the unhappy men and women appearing before the magistrates, one after the other, for the most part poor, degraded, and miserable. Looked at from the outside, I knew the window only appeared as a mass of blurs and blotches, but inside the church it gave me the artist's idea of heavenly virtues, and raised my thoughts to high ideals, and reminded me of the sweet words I have read,

because the light of God shone through it. And surely here, in this place, sacred to many of us by holy experiences, we may shut out from our thoughts, as in that church, turmoil, discouragement, unkindness, and unbelief, that we may see in heaven's light these three graces, so beautiful in themselves, yet so hard of maintenance by many. While theological dogmas rise and fall, while opinions among Christians change and clash continually, still the words of Paul are true: "Now abideth—faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."

In thinking of this declaration I shall not attempt to give you definitions, but rather to point out some exemplifications of these graces.

I

Nowhere do they appear so radiantly as in the earthly history of our Lord Jesus Christ. To this we will first turn our thoughts, and then will try to see how these graces may be displayed by us.

1. It is clear to any reader of the New Testament that Jesus had invincible faith in His mission. When He was only twelve years of age He asked the startling question, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" His first utterance in the synagogue was an application to Himself of

the words spoken about Messiah. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath appointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." His reply to His disciples, when they pressed Him to take food, was this: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work!" In other words, He knew that He had a mission. His life here was not without purpose or without ideal. He had come to rescue men from sin, to raise human society to a higher level, and to enable the world to see and love God as the great and good Father in heaven. And this He meant to do, whatever it cost Him. Unpopularity among the so-called religious people, slander by bitter-tongued Scribes and Pharisees, misunderstanding on the part of His own disciples, and at last an agonising and shameful death on Calvary, were all cheerfully confronted, because He had faith in His mission. What was said of Him, as He went up to the Passover, was true of Him all through His wonderful ministry, "He set His face to go to Jerusalem"; and that set face is what God would fain see in every one who follows Him, for it means the determination, the courage, the inflexible

purpose of one who endures as seeing the invisible. The pilot steering for harbour keeps his eye so fixed on the light at the pier-head, that he does not notice the savage waves which roar between him and it; and Jesus, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the Cross, despising the shame. No man ever lived yet who had more confident faith in the future of the Church and of the world—a future which stretched into an eternity of being and of possibility. And because we believe in Him, our Divine leader, we can say—

“Oh, yet we trust that somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill,
To pangs of nature, sins of will,
Defects of doubts, and taints of blood—
That nothing walks with aimless feet,
That not one life shall be destroy'd,
Or cast as rubbish to the void
When God hath made the pile complete.”

Notice also that—

2. Christ's faith in His Father was as conspicuous as His faith in the mission He had to accomplish, of which He said on the cross, “It is finished!” His vindication He left entirely in His Father's hands, when He yielded up His spirit, in a complete surrender of self, saying, “Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit!” I am not forgetting that He was the everlasting Word, the only begotten of the Father, when I speak thus, but I

wish to remind you that He really became man—having limited Himself, having “emptied” Himself, as Paul said, that He might become the true brother of humanity, the Son of Man, sharing with us, in everything save sin, the necessity and the blessedness of faith.

And what shall I say of His hope? It was like a star which went before Him and His followers, even when the night of sin was darkest. Others might have given up such work as His in despair. Jesus might have regarded even His chosen apostles as hopeless. Their mistakes about the nature of His Kingdom, constantly expecting of Him, as they did, some visible and temporal sovereignty; their lack of faith, which more than once paralysed them in attempted service; their impertinent efforts to rebuke and correct Him, as Peter did; their lack of sympathy in sleeping just when He needed them most; their quarrels with each other; and the actual denial of Him by their leader: in the consciousness of all this, if He had not abounded in “hope,” He would have given them up; yet, “having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.”

How full of encouragement this thought is for us, seeing that He is the same to-day as then. We may be despondent about ourselves when we see faults unconquered, interrupted growth,

failure in service, and the like ; but He is hopeful about us still, steadily resolved to make the best of every soul which entrusts itself to Him, and to present us at last faultless before the presence of God with exceeding joy.

3. It was because He had faith in His mission, and in His Father, and hope about every one, and even about the world, which He found lying in wickedness, that He so constantly displayed His love ; for, as we have already seen, charity is supported by faith and hope.

Never was such love revealed as His. It was poured forth freely as sunshine through the aether, which illumines deserts as well as gardens, and brightens the face of a street arab as readily as that of a prince. He loved the poor woman who was a sinner, as well as Martha and Mary. He fed hungry people, who only cared for the bread that perished ; and cured ten lepers, though nine were thankless. He raised the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue, as well as His friend Lazarus ; and while He loved Peter, James, and John, He did not withhold love from Judas Iscariot, though He knew he would betray Him.

Think of all this and of much else which is similar to it in the gospel records, and you will then see how fully these words were exemplified

in Him, "Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth." And is it not in Him that we see the love of God, as infinite, undeserved, and eternal?

Indeed, may we not dare to believe that He embraces all earnest souls in His great love, even though they contend against each other with angry clamours? For my part, as the years go by, I feel more in sympathy than I once was with dear, broad-hearted George Matheson, when he put up that prayer of his—

"Gather us in, Thou Love that fillest all,
Gather our rival faiths within Thy fold,
Rend each man's temple veil and bid it fall,
That we may know that Thou hast been of old;
Gather us in.

Gather us in : we worship only Thee ;
In varied names we stretch a common hand
In diverse forms a common soul we see ;
In many ships we seek one spirit-land ;
Gather us in.

Each sees one colour of Thy rainbow light ;
Each looks upon one tint and calls it heaven
Thou art the fulness of our partial sight,
We are not perfect till we find the seven ;
Gather us in."

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female—for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” “And now abideth faith, hope, charity; but the greatest of these is charity.”

II

It remains that we should look down from the sunny height of Christ's example to ourselves, who live on a lower level, and yet in some measure we may hope to display these graces—faith, hope, and charity.

1. Faith is the evidence of things not seen. It is the faculty of the soul by which we are conscious of the invisible; the hand by which we lay hold of it. By it we become confident that our work and our lot are not altogether dependent on ourselves or on our fellows, but on God, Who orders things for us, and endues us with opportunities and faculties, for the use of which we are accountable to Him. And the consciousness that we are not alone, that we are not forgotten, is a constant solace and inspiration. If we are in trouble, for example, and regard it not as an unhappy chance, but as something which has a purpose in it, we face it more cheerfully, submitting ourselves to the Divine will. If we are engaged in some Christian work, which (like all

other work) has its discouragements, we are helped by the assurance that we are fellow-labourers together with God, that He will take the task into His own hands, and make more of it than we dare expect, although possibly through the added agency of others than ourselves. And if we are nearing the end of life, if the whole generation to which we belong seems to be slipping away, one by one, into the unknown, faith teaches us that death is not destruction, but transition, and reveals to us possibilities in another sphere, far greater than those we have enjoyed here. Some even of those who have never known Jesus Christ have not been without faith in a blessed immortality. Amongst the pagans God left not Himself without witness. In the last hour of his life, Socrates said to his sorrowing followers, "You may bury me, if you can catch me"; and then added with a smile, "I would not have you sorrow at my hard lot, or say at the interment, 'Thus we lay out Socrates'; or, 'Thus we follow him to the grave, and bury him.' Be of good cheer, you bury my body only." And ought not we, to whom Christ has spoken, bringing life and immortality to light, look on with growing faith to the future which lies before us? "If in this life only we had hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable," said Paul.

“How can they live, how will they die,
How bear the cross of grief,
Who have not got the light of faith,
The courage of belief?”

2. Then to our faith let us add hope, for it is one of God's brightest angels,—“the hovering angel,” as Milton calls it,—always near but never clasped, leading us upward with songs of gladness.

Hope about ourselves should be encouraged. It is no proof of devoutness to be always shedding penitential tears, or to be so sensible of our own weaknesses as to be despondent about our future. Victory is generally the guerdon of those who expect it, confident in the rightness of their cause, and the help of omnipotence on the side of right. When King Ramirez, in the year 909, vowed to deliver Castile from the shameful tribute imposed by the Moors of one hundred virgins delivered annually, he collected his troops and openly defied their King Abdelraman.

“The king called God to witness, that come there weal
or woe,
Thenceforth no maiden tribute from out Castile should
go,—
‘At least I will do battle on God our Saviour's foe,
And die beneath my banner before I see it so.’”

He fought with courage but without hope of victory, and after a furious conflict was defeated on the plain of Clavijo. But that night (the legend

says), while he was sleeping, St. Jago appeared to him in vision, and promised him the victory. Next morning he called his officers about him, and told them his dream ; inspired them also with hope of heavenly aid ; and that day the enemy was overwhelmed by the Christian warriors, and ever since the war-cry of Spain has been "Santiago." The pages of history are crowded with examples of victories, won through the inspiration which comes from hope.

But if you are fighting against sin you are manifestly fighting on the side of omnipotence, and may therefore hope for, and confidently expect, ultimate success. You are on the winning side, and will come off more than conqueror through Him Who loves you.

And take home to yourselves the same cheer if you are trying to teach others about the claims of Christ, or to win back those who are captives to sin and misery. Is not yours the very work of Christ Jesus Himself? May you not hope in Him? Have you not the right to pray expectantly that He will give you success? Hope on, hope always, even about the worst, and the reward shall come!

3. The faith and hope we have spoken of are the supporters, the inspirers, the sanctifiers of "charity." Paul is not speaking of good nature and kindness,

which naturally appear in an easy-going disposition and in favourable surroundings. He refers to a love which suffers long, and is not easily provoked by what is aggravating, and thinketh no evil, though there are so many suggestions of it. It is the love which goes beyond the home circle, to those who have not the claims of relationship; the love which is kind to the unattractive and undeserving; the love which does not complacently rest on prettily dressed children, but puts up with the vexations of a troublesome class, year in and year out, working with faith in God, and with a hopefulness which does not grow dim. I have seen a good deal of it in my long ministry, and I see much of it still, and often thank God for it; for such love is of God. It may be repaid by ingratitude, but it still abides; it may pass out of our sight through death, but it survives, and grows, and spreads into possibilities of still higher forms of service; and when much of our boasted knowledge passes away, as a dream when one awaketh, when faith is changed into sight, and hope has its promised fruition, then love to God, and love to all His creatures, will appear more radiant than before; for "love never faileth."

Well may all Christians join in the familiar prayer—

“O Lord, Who hast taught us that all our doings without charity are nothing worth, send Thy Holy Ghost, and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity, the very bond of peace and of all virtue, without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before Thee: Grant this for Thine only Son Jesus Christ’s sake.”

“And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.”

IV

THE HEAVENLY TWIN

“Wisdom and goodness are twin-born ! One
Must hold both sisters, never seen apart.”

COWPER.

“Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.”
—ST. MATT. x. 16.

OUR Heavenly Father intended that we, His children, should learn some lessons from creatures lower than ourselves in capacity and worth. He has put all these in subjection under our feet, that we may add to our own well-being by their employment, and increase their well-being by our care. St. Francis of Assisi, who tamed the savage wolf, and talked to the birds around him as his “little sisters,” followed in his Lord’s footsteps in this, as in much else ; and a hint of it is given in Mark’s statement—about our Lord’s forty days’ sojourn in the wilderness : “He was with the wild beasts—and the angels ministered unto Him.” Jesus Christ understood and loved dumb creatures ;

and His teaching was rich in allusions to their characteristics and habits. The fish, wandering in the gloomy depths of the lake, were to Him emblems of souls waiting to be ingathered and raised to another atmosphere: the common sparrows, which no man thought worth consideration, He spoke of as being fed by His Father's bounty; and the sheep, lost, helpless, and ready to die, reminded Him of those He had come to seek and to save. It was in accord with His customary teaching that He should allude to the wisdom of the serpent and the harmlessness of the dove.

On this occasion our Lord was addressing the disciples whom He had chosen, and was for the first time sending forth as apostles. They were to be His representatives as well as His ambassadors, and therefore they required both integrity of character and wisdom in conduct. They were to be "blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation." He would have them to be clean in life, simple in aim, gentle in disposition, stainless in reputation, "harmless as doves." At the same time they were to be prudent,—not foolishly courting persecution and martyrdom, as some of their successors did,—but exercising tact and discretion; for this is what He meant by saying, "Be ye wise as serpents."

These two creatures are referred to often in Scripture. The dove flew from the ark over the dreary waste of waters, which had drowned the world ; and centuries afterward, in a time of equal hopelessness for the race, the Holy Spirit descended "like a dove" and rested on Him, Who came to be our Saviour, and from first to last was an emblem of peace and innocence.

But the serpent, from the days of the Fall, had been an emblem of evil more often than of good, and it was characteristic of our Lord that He recognised its sagacity in avoiding danger rather than its harmfulness. There is scarcely a nation which has not attributed to the serpent powers and subtlety superhuman, and by many it has been worshipped either from fear or from admiration. The Phœnicians and the Chinese regarded it as a symbol of superior wisdom, and the Græco-Romans associated it not only with the Furies, but with Ceres, the goddess of Fruits ; with Mercury, the god of Merchandise ; and with Æsculapius, the god of Medicine. Hence the idea in our Lord's words would not be unfamiliar to the early Christians : "Be ye wise as serpents."

The meaning of our Lord's exhortation is, however, best seen in the light of His own life—

"For in Thy life the law appears,
Drawn out in living characters."

The "wisdom" of our Lord was unfailing. How perfectly He read the characters of those Pharisees whom every one else regarded as patterns of piety. How readily He recognised the sincere penitence underlying the shameful life of the woman who was a sinner. How accurately He gauged the weakness of Simon Peter, and how gladly He saw the personal loyalty which was beneath it all the time. In every discourse, in every miracle, He adapted Himself with unfailing wisdom to the condition of those He came into contact with. But with all this He was harmless as a dove. With power to overwhelm His foes, He would not even resist them; with possibilities of self-aggrandisement and of self-indulgence open to none beside, He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.

Now, we may not only see these characteristics in Him, but we may gain them by association with Him. He is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption. He identifies us with Himself, so that what is His becomes ours. A man may be in a very doubtful position in business, but if one enters into partnership with him whose ability is universally recognised, and whose credit is unlimited, his position becomes stable and assured. And besides this: fellowship produces likeness. The tone of a school, for

example, is lowered or heightened by the lads in the sixth form. The whole family becomes ennobled by the daily presence of a godly father or a devout mother. A company of soldiers is made brave by the presence of one hero among them. Robertson taught us this truth. He said: "It is a marvellous thing to see how a pure and innocent heart purifies all that it approaches. The most ferocious natures are soothed and tamed by innocence. And so with human beings, there is a delicacy so pure that vicious men in its presence become almost pure; all of purity which is in them is brought out; like attaches to like. . . . A corrupt heart elicits in an hour all that is bad in us; a spiritual one brings out and draws to itself all that is best and purest. Such was Christ. He stood in this world the light of the world, to which all sparks of light gradually gathered. He stood in the presence of impurity, and men became pure." Thus it was with Christ, thus it still is, for He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. And if we have Him in the heart, in the home, in the Church, we shall be transformed into the same image. We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

Now, let us study the two characteristics set before us in my text—both in themselves and in association with each other, and afterwards we

will see where and how they should assert themselves in our conduct as Christians.

I

I. Wisdom is used here for sagacity, the ability to see what is best to be done, an understanding of how to adapt means in order to secure ends. Paul was endued with this faculty. With singular promptness he availed himself of any opportunity for preaching the glad tidings. With unfaltering judgment he chose the best men—Timothy, Silas, Titus, and their comrades—for difficult service. With marvellous flexibility of method he alluded to fields and gardens, in addressing the rural folk in Lystra, but to temples made with hands, in pleading with the men of Athens. God gave him grace to be wise as a serpent. This is to some extent a native gift, for neither age nor experience will endow some men with wisdom; but no Christian need be altogether without it. For, "If any man lack wisdom he is to ask of God, Who gives to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him." It comes to a man who is really teachable and prayerful; for, as Wordsworth said—

"Wisdom is oftimes nearer when we stoop
Than when we soar."

2. "Be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."

The word "harmless" is too feeble and negative in character to express fully our Lord's idea. He wished His people to be simple in character, straightforward in conduct, innocent of the tricks as well as the vices of their fellows, so obviously without guilt that slander itself would fail to injure their good repute. As Dr. South puts it: "Innocence is like polished armour; it adorns and it defends." Who does not remember Bunyan's description of it: "Then the Shepherds had the Pilgrims to another place called Mount Innocence, and there they saw a man clothed all in white; and two men, Prejudice and Ill-will, continually casting dirt upon him. Now, behold, the dirt, whatsoever they cast at him, would in a little time fall off again, and his garment would look as clear as if no dirt had been cast thereat. Then said the Pilgrims, 'What means this?' The Shepherds answered, 'This man is named Godly-man, and this garment is to show the innocency of his life.' Now those that throw dirt at him are such as hate his well-doing; but, as you see, the dirt will not stick upon his clothes; so it shall be with him that liveth innocently in the world. Whoever they be that would make such men dirty, they labour all in vain; for God, by that a little time is spent, will cause that

their innocence shall break forth as the light, and their righteousness as the noonday."

Such then is innocence, and such is wisdom.

3. But these are to be combined, for Jesus said, "Be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." It seems natural to us to have, and to be content with, some one predominant quality, whether good or bad, but it is in variety and combination of qualities that man should be the superior of brutes. We often notice some outstanding characteristic, and speak of one cunning as a fox, surly as a bear, cruel as a tiger, subtle as a serpent, and so on. This is evidence of our tendency to let certain qualities run to extremes. Thus wisdom tends to develop into cunning, strength into hardness, gentleness into weakness, whereas our Lord wishes to see in us an all-round development, a balancing of characteristics which seem contradictory, just as in the natural world there is a counterbalancing of forces—the rain with the sun, the night with the day, centripetal with the centrifugal forces. Brute creatures may have one pre-eminent quality—but man, their ruler, their king, is to combine them if he would attain perfection. Some inkling of this asserted itself in allusions to centaurs—with the intelligence of a man combined with the swiftness of a horse; or the cherubims, with the wings of an eagle and the hands of a man. Such a combina-

tion was grotesque in the physical realm, but in the spiritual sphere is beautiful. And this appears in the injunction, "Be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves," *i.e.*, be clear in your perception, and be pure in your motives; be keen in your judgment, but be noble in your character. St. Paul understood and enforced this lesson when he wrote to the Romans, "I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil"; and to the Corinthians, "Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men." It is the combination of these qualities which is so rare, and yet so urgently inculcated by our Lord. Quaint old Quarles puts it well when he says, "Wisdom without innocence is knavery, innocence without wisdom is foolery; be therefore as wise as serpents, and innocent as doves. The subtlety of the serpent instructs the innocence of the dove; the innocence of the dove corrects the subtlety of the serpent." What God hath joined together let no man separate.

II

The display of these combined qualities, in daily conduct, is looked for by our Lord, and nothing will do more to glorify Him. Like all His teaching, this touches both our thoughts and our conduct.

1. In dealing with Divine truth, for example, we require both the clear mind and the clean heart. However devout you may be, however familiar with your Bible, you need wisdom too, and must never forget that careful scholarship and sound research are amongst the true servants of the God of truth. On the other hand, the keenest intellect, divorced from devotion, will fail to discover the spiritual meaning of forgiveness, prayer, and sanctification of life. The old legend tells that the Holy Grail disappeared from among men because one of its keepers failed in his chastity of thought, word, and deed, and when with smoke and noise a vision of it passed through the great hall of Arthur's court, though all saw smoke and light, and heard the noise, none saw the Grail except the youngest knight, who was always clad in white armour, and took as the motto of his life—

“My strength is as the strength of ten,
Because my heart is pure.”

Yes, the words of Jesus are still true: “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.”

2. Again, in dealing with those who are dear to you, let wisdom and love be blended. If, as a parent, you fail to recognise your children's faults, and indulge their fancies to the top of their bent, you will have to mourn your want of wisdom when

you see their deterioration in character. They say that "love is blind." If so, it is not the truest love. The wife who hotly defends her husband, and flashes with indignation at any suggestion that he is not all he should be, often sees his faults more clearly than his severest critic, and weeps and prays over them before God. The greatness of her love is to be recognised in this—not that she can see no imperfection, but that, seeing it so clearly, she is forgiving and patient still. Indeed, such was the love of Christ, Who saw His disciples' faults, and even foresaw how they would fail, yet, "having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end."

3. Probably it is still more difficult to deal as Christ would have you do with your competitors in the world. A follower of Christ need not yield to others in sagacity and shrewdness. He may be, and ought to be, prompt in his use of opportunity, wise in his investments, a good buyer, a clever salesman; for it would be a shame and a curse if all the wealth of the world were to pass into the hands of men who did not win it fairly, or use it rightly. Joseph and Daniel were none the less devout because they proved capable men of business and wise statesmen. But wisdom, or shrewdness, is to be modified by loyalty to righteousness and love to men. The Christian is to be

wise as a serpent yet harmless as a dove, refusing to take unfair advantage of another's ignorance, and not compassing another's ruin to make it a stepping-stone to fortune. He may be laughed at for letting a good chance slip, and unscrupulous men may combine against him in the belief that he is soft and foolish ; but Dr. Johnson wrote what was true in the triplet—

“Against the head which innocence secures,
 Insidious malice aims her darts in vain,
 Turn'd backward by the powerful breath of heaven.”

Be just, and fear not.

4. Finally, we who are engaged in Christian work, as these apostles were, would do well to heed our Lord's counsel. Some have zeal without knowledge. They refuse to reconsider their interpretation of Scripture, shutting their eyes to the light as firmly as the Papacy ever did. They resent with dogged conservatism any change in the methods of work or the form of worship to which they have been accustomed, and rather than yield they would sit in an empty church while thousands surge past it unblessed. They may be “harmless” as doves (though that is doubtful), but they assuredly are not “wise” as serpents.

But in our days the tendency is the other way. The serpent is more popular than the dove. Intellect is more cultivated than earnestness.

With knowledge of doctrines and of churches many Christians have no passion, no soul, no fervour in devotion. Their altar is heaped up, but no fire from heaven consumes the sacrifice laid on it. This is where our deficiency lies, and the Lord, Who knows all things, is compelled to say of some of us, "Ye search the Scriptures, but you do not come unto Me." To His feet let us make our way, that we may receive the gift of His Spirit, and are made willing to seek the world's salvation, though it means for us, as it meant for Him, a crown of thorns and a cross of agony.

V

THE GRACE OF GRATITUDE

“Man is the World’s high-priest! He doth present
The sacrifice for all; while they below
Unto the service mutter an assent,
Such as springs use that fall, and winds that blow!
He that to praise and laud Thee doth refrain,
Doth not refrain unto himself alone,
But robs a thousand who would praise Thee fain,
And doth commit a world of sin in one.”

HERBERT.

“In everything give thanks.”—I THESS. v. 18.

GOD calls for our songs of praise even on earth. He longs to see in us, for our own good, a spirit of gratitude even when we have no heart to sing. The well-beloved Son during His whole career on earth, though He was despised and rejected of men, a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief, was always cheerful and praiseful. “He rejoiced in spirit.” He spoke of His joy as something which He experienced while adversity dogged His footsteps. He went knowingly to the agony of Gethsemane, singing a hymn

of praise with His disciples. This is a spirit to be cultivated by all His followers, though the differences between them in regard to its cultivation are manifest and marvellous.

“Some murmur—when their sky is clear
And wholly bright to view—
If one small speck of dark appear
In their great heaven of blue.
And some with thankful love are filled,
If but one streak of light,
One ray of God’s good mercy, gild
The darkness of their night.”

Let us try to set before ourselves as our own ideal, a life of persistent praisefulness and habitual gratitude, that henceforth we may give thanks in everything. Paul was a splendid example of the attainment of this grace, for he was joyful in tribulations, and had to meet more of them than we. He often suffered from the depressing influence of ill-health, and from the disheartenment which follows disappointment. He was no luxurious epicure with whom life had always gone smoothly, but knew enough of hardship and penury to feel for many Christians now who have to meet the wants of a family with inadequate means, or who daily endure vexations in business, in this age of fierce competition. In the factory of Aquila he toiled steadily to earn an honest subsistence for

himself and others, and with sweet content did comparatively menial work, while conscious of powers which would fit him for service more congenial, more effective, and more durable. He understood the vexations and slights which still confront an earnest Christian among godless comrades, and felt as many of us feel, the temptation to be irritable or sullen, amid frequent provocations. It was not from the superior level of a theorist, but from the common level of ordinary experience, that he wrote these words: "In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." He himself exemplified obedience to this injunction, for his own calmness was not perturbed by the worries of life, any more than the quiet depths of the sea are stirred by the winds which sweep over its surface.

Do not therefore brush aside this exhortation as if it set before you what was utterly impracticable. Do not listen to what may be said about it as a pulpit disquisition on an experience far removed from the possibilities of your life. The grace which made Paul what he was can abound to you also, so that in spite of adverse circumstances or a morbid temperament, you also may in everything give thanks to God.

I

We will try to see more clearly the nature of the temper or habit of mind which is inculcated here. It is not a difficult thing to a Christian to feel grateful to God for obvious blessings, such as restoration to health, consummation of hopes, success in enterprise, and the like. In some things a religious man readily gives thanks, but he finds it hard to do so in "everything" that befalls him, for this would include troubles and disappointments, which make up much of life. But Paul suggests that there is a thankfulness which is the outcome of inward joy, as well as a thankfulness which springs from happiness. This distinction has been often drawn, and should always be kept clearly before us. If something "happens" which is pleasant and favourable, we say that we are "happy"; but if things are unpleasant and unfavourable, we are unhappy; though we may still feel "joy" within, which is as a "well of water springing up into everlasting life." Paul was "joyful" in tribulation, and the persecuted Hebrew Christians took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, but they were scarcely "happy" about it, and we by the same grace may even in times of adversity "rejoice evermore," and in "everything give thanks."

Now this temper of mind is unlike the cool and

cynical indifference to trouble which many have cultivated. The unflinching defiance of ill-fortune characteristic of the Stoic, the supercilious contempt for life's vicissitudes characteristic of the Epicurean are not Christian—indeed, they are hardly human. If you lose your sensitiveness to the joys and sorrows of life, they can no longer be God's means of culture to you. They will become like blows struck on iron which was once hot and malleable, but is now cold and unyielding. Nor will you be stirred any longer by pity for others, apart from which you cannot do the Lord's work in His Spirit. And true thankfulness will be as impossible to you in your callousness, as it would be to you in your despondency. A sensitive heart is essential to praisefulness.

I understand Paul to mean that we should cultivate, under all circumstances, a thankful frame of mind such as can only result from conscious dependence in everything on the loving care of our Father in heaven. It would not be natural, necessary, or even desirable, to be always expressing thanks, but we ought to have such a spiritual balance that our minds will be reverting to God constantly and gratefully, as the needle in the compass, momentarily diverted by some passing attraction, swings back to its proper point directly that has been removed. The tendency of life with

each of us is to be Godward, and then this spirit of thankfulness will be habitual.

There are times when most of us audibly praise God with joyful lips, and to this we are helped, and might be more helped by the service of song. It is true that music of itself is not worship. The most perfect harmony would be no substitute for inward devotion. But the recognition of this fact will not justify slovenliness or neglect in the rendering of public and united praise, which may not only express our own adoration, but may also lift the thoughts of others heavenward. And let me ask you this—Why do you, who can charm your friends by singing on some social occasion, withhold your help from the service of praise, giving no time for its culture, and standing with closed lips and critical ears, when you ought to remember the Divine dictum—"Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me, saith the Lord"? Let young men, maidens, old men, and children praise the name of the Lord.

You say you have no gift of song. Well, God expects of every man according to that which he hath, and not according to that he hath not. And one is glad that this apostle speaks not only of singing, but of "making melody in your hearts" unto the Lord. There are harmonies on earth which are only heard in heaven, and other

harmonies here which never reach there. But whatever our expression of joy may be, seek to cultivate the spirit of continuous gratitude, that with all sincerity you may say with Addison—

“Ten thousand thousand precious gifts
My daily thanks employ,
Nor is the least a cheerful heart
That tastes those gifts with joy.”

II

The advantages of a thankful heart are manifold. Cheerfulness is one of the brightest angels God sends on earth, and those who meet it at home, and in business, and in Church work, feel that it is indeed a messenger from heaven. This angel comes to you, children, naturally, and if you welcome him he will keep you through anxieties when you are older, and will lead you through “the valley of the shadow,” to the pleasant heights of heaven. I want you boys and girls to remember that your Heavenly Father intends you always to be cheerful, to look your lessons in the face bravely, to take your vexations at school blithely, and to be gleams of sunshine to those at home. Your natural buoyancy, your cheery way of looking at the bright side of things, your fun and gaiety are among His best gifts. Be on your guard then against all that would weaken these. Watch

against passionate fits, and sullen tempers, and gloomy faces, lest you trouble those you ought to cheer. And never forget that nothing but the grace of God, which will be given if you pray for it, will keep you habitually cheerful. Things will not always go smoothly with you, people will not always be kind, and you will need—as we older people do—the constant sense of God's presence, if you would "in everything give thanks."

I praise God for some of you older friends who have retained and developed and sanctified this natural grace of childhood. The joy of the Lord is your strength. Cares which to some would appear intolerable seem to sit lightly on you. Falls in your walk through life which would break the bones of those who are weak, you are ready to laugh over. Even consciousness of failure, instead of leading you to give up in despair, braces you up to more determined effort. Indeed, I know some Christians whose merry heart does good like medicine (more good than most medicines), for their cheeriness is a sovereign disinfectant, which keeps the whole atmosphere around them sweet and pleasant. Would to God it were thus with us all!

Dear brethren, for your own sakes and for the help of others, seek to cultivate an equable, hopeful, and grateful habit of mind. It is true that we are

told to weep with those that weep, and Job's comforters did that, but their helplessness as consolers has passed into a proverb. No doubt it is a good thing to pity a man, but no amount of pity will of itself comfort him into patience. If you would fully do what the Lord Jesus would do, you need the strong hand as well as the tearful eye—for you are called upon to lift your brother's burden a little, as well as to feel sorry that it has galled his shoulder. In our hours of trial and temptation, the helpers we need are those who, by God's help, have overmastered some grief terrible as our own, and who in the process have not lost hope or thankfulness. The greatest of Comforters is both All-pitiful and Almighty; and every one who in His service would really aid his brother, must learn to comfort him with that "comfort wherewith he himself has been comforted of God."

III

There are difficulties in the way of cultivating the grace we have been thinking about to which we cannot shut our eyes, but they are not insurmountable. If there were no causes of grief and melancholy, we should not have had such frequent insistence on the grace of thankfulness. The walk through life is not pleasant to all of us—nor to any of us always—the sweet hedgerows

of home life are left behind for a bleak wilderness, the sunshine of prosperity is sometimes exchanged for threatening clouds and awful storms. Many of you know this in business experience. Your endurance is strained by its inexorable demands, you fail to win what you earnestly strive for, you are vexed by the folly or indolence of others; by injustice and petulance on the part of masters or mistresses, or by the failure of clients and customers. Perhaps you are harassed by the unaccountable fluctuations of trade, by the ebb and flow of the current of commerce, by the capriciousness with which it cuts out for itself a fresh channel in an unexpected direction, leaving altogether places and people it once enriched. It is not easy to you "in everything to give thanks," though it is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

Much the same experiences prevail in our own home life, whatever its charms. What anxieties some of you have about the health and education of your children, and what sorrow and loneliness others endure because they have no children to care for! Or it may be that there is a lack of harmony in the family circle. The wife fails to set herself to her husband, like "perfect music unto noble words," or he has no noble words to chime in with her perfect music, so there is

jangling and discord instead of heaven's harmony.

We could all tell something of our troubles and difficulties, and each one has his own special reason for saying, "To obey that command is impracticable for me." But is it expected of us all? I cannot but think it is. There seems to be no suggested limit to the application of such precepts as this, which abound in Scripture. But if God *expects* a thankful heart of you, He will make it possible, and where natural infirmity abounds, or difficulties seem special, there His grace will much more abound. Do not therefore whisper to yourself the fatalist's conclusion—"Some people were born cheerful and thankful, but I was not; so God does not expect this of me." He does expect it of you, and if it be specially hard to you, He whispers, "All things are possible to him that believeth." There's the secret of success. It lies in the faith which lays hold of God as revealed in Christ Jesus, Who was the Man of Sorrows, and yet the King of Joy. It is what we know of God's will in Christ's teaching and in Christ's life that will help us, because there we learn what the end of suffering will be, that the crown follows the cross.

There is but little help for us outside Christ. True, in nature the birds sometimes sing, but they

are silent in the storm. True, the summer sea looks beautiful, but often it is treacherous and cruel. And in Providence, as in nature, there is much which we cannot reconcile with our ideas of mercy and kindness. Defenceless innocent creatures are killed by those fiercer than themselves, while dreadful inequalities in the lot of men threaten one's belief in Divine justice and goodness. How can we praise God in everything? Only by accepting the revelation we have of His character in Christ Jesus, Who Himself learned obedience by the things that He suffered, and made the cross of pain and shame His stepping-stone to the throne. Believing in Him with unshaken assurance, we are awaiting His own reconciliation of His ways with His revealed character. Even a finite man we would not attempt to judge by the few fragmentary sentences we hear from his lips; and we should think it unfair to condemn him as unwise while he was still engaged on work which was obviously incomplete. We should wait. Then surely we ought to wait still more patiently and humbly for the unfolding of Divine purposes, seeing they are ruled by an infinite God whose ways stretch far beyond our ken. Listen to the words of the great Revealer which come to us amid the perplexities of human life, "Let not your heart be troubled ;

believe in God, believe also in Me." All things are working for good to them that love Him. He will bring good out of what seems to you nothing but evil ; and even your own failures, which cast you into despondency, He can make stepping-stones to a higher life. Therefore be cheerful, thankful, hopeful, that you may lead others onward who now are faltering in despair. It is said that in the Franco-German war, the men in the army of Prince Frederick Charles were so desperately tired that they were dropping out of the ranks till the commander gave the command, " Singers to the front." But when the stirring notes of the " Watch on the Rhine " rolled and swelled above the sound of the marching, thoughts of God's goodness to the Fatherland, and of prayers being offered in homes beyond the Rhine, so filled them with new hope and courage, that they marched to certain victory. For other's sake and your own, seek to live a songful life, to keep a praiseful heart. Nay, pray for it as George Herbert did in those quaint lines—

" Wherefore I cry, and cry again,
And in no quiet canst Thou be
Till I a thankful heart obtain
Of Thee.

Not thankful when it pleaseth me
As if Thy blessings had spare days,
But such a heart whose pulse shall be
Thy praise ! "

VI

CONDUCT, THE TEST OF CHARACTER

“Character is Fate ;
Men’s dispositions do their doom dictate !”

LYTTON.

“ Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are whom ye obey ; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness ? ”—
ROM. vi. 16.

PAUL’S teaching in this chapter is undoubtedly opposed to popular opinion. We are wont to boast of our independence—our lordliness—our innate dignity, whereas he assumes that we are, and must always be, “servants,” whether of sin or of righteousness. In other words, man is governed by the element he lives in, swayed by the tendency to which he commits himself. If unregenerate, he is under the rule of sin, but when he gives himself up to God the dominion of sin is broken, and henceforth he is under the reign of grace, but he is a servant still. He has changed masters, but he still *has* a master.

This doctrine may be illustrated by the act of one who cast himself into a swift, strong

stream. In spite of his exertions, when he has once done that, he follows the course of the current ; and thus the unregenerate man is carried downward by the stream of evil tendency, by what is elsewhere called "the course of this world." But when he has been withdrawn from it by the redeeming power of Christ, he finds himself in another stream of tendency. To use Paul's phrase in the third verse, he is "baptized into Jesus Christ," and thenceforward he finds his highest freedom in letting himself be governed and swayed by Him. Man, therefore, is always the servant of some one, and there is no middle state between the service of sin and the service of God. If any one has yielded himself to the influence and mastery, whether of good or evil, he is henceforth its servant. That is the gist of Paul's teaching in this passage.

Now we may find here a test by which we may know ourselves, so as to see the kingdom or the tendency to which we ourselves belong. Our Lord's teaching is precisely in harmony with Paul's in declaring that all men may be divided into two classes, and only two. To be convinced of this, you have only to recall His parables in the 13th chapter of Matthew, where He speaks of the final division and severance of men into the evil and the good, as the shepherd divides sheep from the goats, or as the wheat is separated from the tares. Yet, as

a matter of practical experience we find it very difficult, and often quite impossible, to make any such distinction between men. Though the godly and the godless may both be here, the difference between them sometimes seems to be very slight and indefinable. Indeed, it is by no means easy even to judge ourselves ; so tangled are our motives, so numerous and startling our inconsistencies. Christians though we believe ourselves to be, restrained though we may have been from any gross or outward violation of God's law, yet the finer expressions of sin, our hastinesses and follies, and our evil desires, which find no outward manifestation, are not avoided altogether, so that we need daily repentance and pardon, and that constant cleansing which was symbolically set forth in the upper room when Jesus knelt and washed the feet of His own disciples. Still, though our sanctification may thus admit of degrees and differences in Christian development, these do not determine whether or no we are in the state of sin or in the state of grace. Hence some Christians are perplexed about themselves, and feel as Cowper did when he asked—

“’Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought,
Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I His, or am I not?”

It seems to me that in our text we may find some help, because we are taught in it to look to the general tendency of life for the test of character and condition. If we have yielded ourselves, in resolve and in act, as servants to obey, whether it be to sin or to righteousness, then his servants we are whom we obey.

In speaking to you of this self-judgment which many find so difficult, I observe that—

I

We are ready enough in our judgment of others, though often mistaken in our own conclusions about them.

No doubt there are sins so obvious that "they go beforehand unto judgment." The profligate, the drunkard, the cruel and the sensual, the proud and the worldly, are condemned as those who have no inheritance in Christ with the sanctified. And our Lord teaches us, by His revelation of the severance at the last day, that the habitual negation of good, the non-doing of duty, is also decisive of character, and therefore of destiny. All this is known to God, and will be determined by Him; but again and again we are warned against attempting to assume His place by taking up the rôle of judge. Thus James says: "There is one Lawgiver, Who is able to save and to

destroy; who art thou then that judgest another?" And our Lord, in His Sermon on the Mount, says: "Judge not, that ye be not judged."

The longer I live and the fuller my knowledge of human character and condition becomes, the more I admire the wisdom of those words; for, though I am not probably less keen or experienced than the average man, I have often found myself in the wrong in my judgment of others. Our knowledge of our fellows is necessarily partial and superficial. We do not know the causes of failure in one whom we condemn, some inborn weakness, some crookedness of temper, some defect of will or taint of blood, which God makes more allowance for than we. Nor do we see the circumstances of a man, in any degree of completeness, or we might sometimes acknowledge that his home sorrow is enough to make him brooding or irritable; or one might discover that, stern as he seems in his business, he is a very angel of gentleness to his crippled child or invalid wife. Let us listen then to Paul as he asks: "But thou, why dost thou judge thy brother? For we must all stand before the judgment-seat of God." The Eternal Judge alone knows us as we are, and doubtless He will recognise as His own, some whom we regard as outcasts. As Lowell puts it—

“For whom the heart of man shuts out,
Sometimes the heart of God takes in,
And fences them all round about
With silence 'mid the world's loud din.”

Now, if this be true, let us not be too elated or too downhearted about ourselves. We are often misunderstood. We offend others innocently and inadvertently, and they think and say evil of us. On the other hand, we are sometimes far too highly thought of by those who do not know us well. We have undiscovered faults, and perhaps unrecognised virtues. We are both better and worse than others think us to be. Good Thomas à Kempis said as truly as wisely: “Thou art not the more holy for being praised, nor the more worthless for being dispraised. What thou art, that thou art; neither by words canst thou be made greater than what thou art in the sight of God.”

II

But though all this and much more might be said of the judgment of a man by others, it does not lessen the responsibility resting on every one to judge himself. It was a pagan philosopher who left on record the immortal dictum: “Know thyself.” And it was an inspired Psalmist who taught us where to find illumination for this when he exclaimed, “For Thou wilt light my candle;

the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness." And another Psalmist, conscious of self-ignorance, prayed: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

The difficulties in the way of self-knowledge are greater now than in the Psalmist's days, because the rush of life is swifter, and noisier, and meditation is, to many, almost impossible. But still, they are fools who, through thoughtlessness, fail to see how they stand in relation to God—for this we may know, and ought to know for our own good always.

Its advantages are manifold. What peace comes to a man who is sure of being in Christ, and echoes Paul's assurance, "I know whom I have believed." Whether suffering or service, whether life or death, lies before him, his heart is quiet from fear of evil. "Justified by faith," he has peace with God. On the other hand, if any one is conscious of estrangement, and recognises the solemn and ominous fact in his habitual prayerlessness, surely he will not fail to repent, and so find pardon and peace at the feet of One Who is willing and even eager to give it.

Indeed, we ought to know more of ourselves than our general attitude towards God, and

towards sin, for, if we are conscious of weaknesses of character, we can avoid conditions in which they might prove fatal, or if we recognise our capacities for service, we get an answer to our prayer, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" For these and many other reasons we ought to "know ourselves."

But if we would not be self-deceived, our decision must be arrived at by consideration of our habit and tendency, and not of our casual acts or thoughts.

I. Many a true disciple, morbidly inclined, has given up all hope about his personal salvation because of some lapse into evil on his part. Peter might have done so after his lamentable denial of his Lord, and with the more reason because his fall had not been without forewarning. But he was saved from despair by the love of a Christian comrade, who would not let him go, and by the gracious, patient love of the Lord Himself. And it is this, or that, or both which has saved some of us. Others have prayed for us when we could hardly pray for ourselves, and in the hour of deepest despondency the old question has rung in our ears a chime of hope, because it comes from Jesus: "Lovest thou Me?"

Some temptations come so suddenly that they take the Christian unawares, and he is overcome by

what at another time or in different circumstances would not have touched him. Professor Drummond tells of a duel he saw between two German students, one of whom had only a single form of stroke, downwards upon the head, while the other was quick and varied in attack. But suddenly, at the thirteenth round, the apparently dull man, with a rapid movement changed his stroke, and brought his sword swiftly upward, cleaving the chin of his opponent, who fell senseless to the ground, with a wound which he would bear the scar of all his life. How did his defeat happen? It was due to a sudden change of direction. Thus temptation comes to some so suddenly and unexpectedly, and from such an unlikely quarter, that a man may be taken off his guard unless he is daily watching and praying. How good God is to us when He says of even the feeble believer: "Though he fall he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand." Our blessed Redeemer will not, cannot give you up, even though you are tempted to give up yourself, and there is no verse more musical and sweet to me than one I sing over often to myself—

"O Love that will not let me go,
 I lift my weary soul to Thee,
 I give Thee back the life I owe,
 That in its ocean depths its flow
 May deeper, fuller be."

2. It is equally true that we are not to judge ourselves too favourably by mere transient emotion, however delightful and heaven-sent it may be. Some people are easily moved. They like to see a play which stirs their feelings till tears flow down their cheeks, and they enjoy religious services of an exciting character for much the same reason. They are constantly tapping the barometer of emotion and asking, "How do I feel to-day?" and forget that a sunny day does not mean summer, and that heavy clouds do not always denote winter. You may be as much deceived by your feelings as by your falls.

3. My text implies that we are to judge by neither, but by the general tendency of life and the habits of conduct. Waves constantly come and go upon the shore, but it is not by one of these, or by several of them, that we can tell whether the tide is coming in or going out. Ask yourself, therefore, such questions as these, if you would know what master is yours: "Have I a shrinking from what is unholy, or do I incline to it readily and even eagerly?" "Do my thoughts tend Godward when my mind is free, or is prayer a mere mechanical performance?" "Looking back on the last few years, has one of these tendencies grown, or the other?" "Whither do I tend? What am I preparing for, or being pre-

pared for?" And because at our best we are ignorant and sometimes self-deceived, let your prayer be that of the collect: "Grant us by Thy Holy Spirit to have a right judgment in all things, and evermore to rejoice in His holy comfort."

III

The apostle further teaches us in this passage that character and habit tend to a consummation, "whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness."

1. In the 23rd verse we read, "The wages of sin is death." It is a solemn declaration. You may disbelieve it, or forget it, or refuse to consider it, but it abides true as ever. What it involves—so far as life after death is concerned—we do not know, except that all that is experienced here, whether good or evil, will be intensified there. But is there no death of the spiritual even on earth, the premonition of the eternal? There are those who so far make themselves the "servants of sin," that their sensibilities are dulled, till they cannot feel and cannot pray. They have grieved the Spirit, and even quenched the Spirit. God and heaven, sin and salvation, have lost all meaning to them, and they already know what it is to "sin unto death." Well may they pray—

“O could I hear Him once again
As I have heard of old,
Methinks He would not call in vain
His wanderer to the fold.”

Do you know something of this? If so, you need resurrection, of which the apostle speaks in this chapter, and the Spirit of God can give it you, that “like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so you also may walk in newness of life.” If any right impulse is left to you, any movement of the soul towards repentance, be true to it—that you may yield your members as servants unto righteousness.

2. God who begins this new work will carry it on, prompting us daily to the obedience which tends to righteousness. In other words, repeated acts of obedience to God’s known will end in established character. The habit of right-doing has become to you, as a Christian, a part of yourself, so that you do the right thing without conflict, perhaps without thought or conscious effort. Emotion is less than it used to be, but *habit* is more. You have an experience something like that of a great surgeon, whose early sensitiveness has been transmuted into skill, so that he can now do, without trembling, what a novice would not dare to attempt. Therefore you ought not to be discouraged if you are less affected by emotion

than in your earlier years ; if only obedience has been transformed into righteousness, and if the service is naturally and instinctively done, which once would have required conscious effort and sacrifice. I know men who have become so entirely God's, that they are truly like instruments in His hands, readily, and almost unconsciously, doing His will. They are no longer their own, they have the joy of complete consecration, so that it is not they who work by conscious acts of strenuous will, but it is manifestly God Who works in them and through them ; they are living incarnations of the Spirit, though hardly realising it. I like these lines of E. B. Browning, and wish they were true of all of us Christians—

“The best men doing their best,
 Know peradventure least of what they do ;
 Men usefulest in the world are simply used ;
 The nail that holds the wood must pierce it first,
 And he alone who wields the hammer sees
 The work advanced by the earliest blow.”

In cultivating this “obedience unto righteousness,” we may be greatly helped by accepting the assurances given to all who really trust and pray. If we do this, we shall not walk through life fearfully, but triumphantly, and instead of expecting defeats, we may assume that sin can no more have dominion over us. That is sound advice of Paul's

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in the 11th verse: "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Accept that as a fact of experience. "Reckon" on it. Assume that you have done with sin by God's grace, as much as the dead have done with this world; and that you are now living in the very atmosphere of God's righteousness, right with Him, right with yourselves, and right with your fellows, enjoying every day an answer to the evening prayer—

"That with the world, myself, and Thee,
I, e'er I sleep, at peace may be."

VII

THE SACRED AND THE SECULAR

"Each hour has its lesson, and each Life ;
And if we miss one life we shall not find
Its lesson in another—rather, go
So much the less complete for evermore,
Still missing something that we cannot name,
Still with our senses so far unattuned
To what the Present brings to harmonise
With our soul's Past."

H. H. KING.

"And Jesus answering them said, Have ye not read so much as this, what David did, when himself was an hungered, and they which were with him ; how he went into the house of God, and did take and eat the shewbread, and gave also to them that were with him ; which it is not lawful to eat but for the priests alone ?"—ST. LUKE vi. 3, 4.

FEW things would appear to a Jew more sacred than the shewbread. It was one of the three symbols to be found in the sanctuary. The golden candlestick represented the light Jehovah shed on the men who drew near to Him ; the altar of incense symbolised the prayers by which His servants consecrated themselves to

His service; and the shewbread, on its table of gold-covered acacia wood, was a sign of fellowship between God and man, a foreshadowing of the bread, which, in the Christian Church, is still an emblem of spiritual communion. Twelve loaves were made by priestly hands each Sabbath, and placed on the table in order to represent the twelve tribes, no one of which was excluded from fellowship with God, and the stale bread thus displaced was reverently eaten by the priests, in solemn silence, within the Holy place.

It was when the tabernacle was pitched at Nob that the incident occurred to which our Lord made reference, and on which, doubtless to the amazement of the Pharisees, He put the seal of His approval. He reminded His antagonists that David and his men, when they were being ruthlessly hunted down by Saul, made their way to the tabernacle, hungry, tired, and desperate, and demanded the sacred shewbread for their needs. Whether moved by fear or pity, the priest transgressed the rubric, and on that Sabbath day the bread which was intended for ordained priests to eat, in the Holy place, was used to satisfy the hunger of a starving band of outlaws. And in effect the great Teacher who came from God said that this was right, not wrong.

His special use of the incident was to justify

His own disciples, who were being blamed for plucking and eating corn on the Sabbath day. Mosaic law allowed corn to be gathered by hungry passers-by, but the Talmud expressly forbade doing this on a Sabbath day because it was a form of labour. But Jesus referred the fault-finders to what they would recognise as good authority. He reminded them that even the necessary duties of the sanctuary compelled the priests themselves to do certain work, some of it menial as that of ordinary bakers. He also showed how David, their national hero, under the pressure of want, violated one of the laws of Jewish Ritual. And then, with what must have seemed to His disciples sublime daring, He declared that He Himself was greater than the Temple, and therefore in His service all things became sacred, and disciples who were loyal to Him might disregard what was conventional, though in its proper place it might be useful. His disciples had grown hungry through following Him, and were right in disregarding a rule which forbade them to pluck corn and eat it on the Sabbath day, for He, the Son of Man, was Lord even of the Sabbath, indeed the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.

I wish simply to take up the incident our Lord referred to in David's life, as illustrating great

principles which should affect our character and conduct; indeed, if we are true followers of Jesus Christ, all things may be sacred to us, and our whole course of life may become a continuous service in God's Temple.

I

The eating of the sacred bread by hungry men throws some light, first, on the relation of Ceremonial to Reality. When our Lord declared that David was right, and that His disciples were right, though they disobeyed certain rules which were desirable in themselves, He repudiated conventional sanctity wherever it would hinder real helpfulness. In His view nothing was too sacred for use if it conduced to man's true welfare. His boldness and freedom in this teaching must have been startling and even shocking to the Scribes and Pharisees, for their religion consisted largely in the careful observance of form and ritual.

Ceremonial of course has its place. Jesus Himself often observed it, and certainly never disregarded it for the sake of asserting His liberty, still less of shocking the sentiment of others. And His disciple Paul took the same line, attending service in the synagogue and in the

Temple, joining others in the fulfilment of vows, and the like. To that great apostle as to his Lord, ceremonial was merely a husk, useful for the preservation of the vital germ within it, but to be destroyed without hesitation when that hidden life required larger freedom. Days might be set apart as peculiarly sacred, symbols might be hedged round with restrictions which would make men thoughtful of their meaning, forms might be employed for religious worship, but these were always to be regarded as means to ends. They were to serve spiritual life, but not to rule it nor to cramp it. They were not to be masters but servants. Every disciple of Jesus is therefore bound to maintain in himself a sense of purpose; to ask himself in all religious observances, "What am I aiming at? what is this intended to do?" In short, what Jesus said of the sacred day might be said of every creed, of every mode of Church government, of every form of Christian worship—this thing was made for man, not man for the thing.

This is evidently a far-reaching principle. It goes further than many care to follow its lead, and the right and safe use of it demands the continual control of the Holy Spirit, lest what we call "freedom" should become carelessness, or self-assertion, or irreverence.

It is by no means easy to cherish proper respect for what is sacred and yet to claim and exercise the right to use it with perfect freedom. This, it appears, was what David did. He was essentially a reverent man, and all his upbringing and habits would make him regard the shewbread with awe, yet when his men were starving for bread, he would not let it lie useless on the golden table of the sanctuary. Like him we are to claim everything for its best and completest use, and we may rightly break with tradition and precedent, if only thus we can meet greater necessity.

If I may use phraseology from the political sphere, I should say we want wisdom in order to become "radical conservatives" or "conservative radicals." We are called on to honour the past, and yet we are to provide for the future; to be ready for change, while we rejoice in our heritage, and reverence it. Our characteristic is not to be the stolidity and fixedness of the rock, nor yet the fickleness of the spray, but the strength of the sea, which is fluid enough to flow forward at the appointed time, yet firm enough to support the argosies of the world.

We may contentedly allow traditions to perish, artificial restraints to be broken through, and once helpful ceremonies to be abandoned, so long as

we are carrying on the service of God for our fellow-men with reverence and earnestness. To the utmost of our power, and in the exercise of divinely given liberty, we are to make the best use of all within range for our spiritual profit, and for the salvation of others from misery and sin. The Church has constantly failed in this. I remember when visiting some of the magnificent and gorgeous churches at Troitza, near Moscow, I was fairly amazed at the contrast between the dirty, ragged, miserable pilgrims and the priceless jewels flashing on every side from the walls and from the sacred pictures. If all these had been sold and used for the education of the ignorant, the ennoblement of the degraded, and the housing of the outcasts, ecclesiasticism would be doing in our day what David did when he used the sacred shewbread to satisfy the hunger of his starving men. Men are more than things, the realities of life are more than its ceremonies—"things seen are temporal, things unseen are eternal."

II

This leads me, secondly, to throw the light of this incident on the relation of human need to Divine supply. In the sanctuary was the shewbread, outside stood hungry, starving men—surely

no mere rules of ritual should separate the one from the other.

Hunger is natural. It follows as a result of work. Appetite is increased by labour, and labour is intended to satisfy appetite. When, for example, men work in a field, that field is the birthplace both of hunger and of harvest. And that is a divinely given intimation that want and supply were intended to go together. No doubt there is a severance between these in a world like this, which is disordered by wrong-doing, but the original design of God was symbolised in Eden, where man's wants might be satisfied from the trees in the garden, to which he needed only to put forth his hand. And we can believe that if in Paradise regained there could be heard one cry of want, all forces, all angels, would instantly combine to minister to that need. Indeed, God Himself is the great and constant giver; from Whom all supplies would flow naturally to His needy creatures, but for the barriers built up by our self-seeking. When our Lord was laying down the laws of His Kingdom, setting forth those principles which we are to keep before us as an ideal which our Heavenly Father desires to see, He said, "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he

that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." At present it is not so. Men's natural rights are in conflict with each other. Society is disordered. Indolence, greed, and selfishness separate between need and supply, and some cannot be satisfied without dishonesty or degradation. Therefore we as citizens, as Christians, are to bring about a better condition of things, that God's will may be done on earth even as it is done in heaven. But however it may be with physical needs, those needs which are highest may be satisfied. Jesus Christ has revealed and opened up the source of their supply, and is able to say even now, "Blessed are ye that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for ye shall be filled." The forgiveness of our sins, strength for our conflicts and for our burden-bearing, hope for our future, on all these we have a sacred claim. These are like the shewbread on the golden table, and the hungry, tired people may be satisfied out of that fulness, and no priestly rules, no ecclesiastical barriers, are to keep them away.

Do not fear to take what God proffers because it seems too sacred. Your hands are not so defiled but He will fill them, and though you have to confess, "Nothing in my hand I bring," you may come for the pardon and reconciliation God offers, without money and without price.

If then you are assured of these primal blessings, do not fear that He will not give you what your spiritual life daily needs for its sustenance. All fulness dwells in Him. Although your own capacities will soon be exhausted, your possibilities in Him are boundless. There is no need, therefore, to lower your ideal of what a Christian life should be, no excuse for supposing that it is impossible for any one to be so true, pure, gentle, patient, devout, and saintly as He would have you be. God will never permit you to frame an ideal too beautiful for His power to make practicable.

“Fear not to build thine eyrie in the heights,
Where golden splendours stay,
And trust thyself unto thine inmost soul
In simple trust always;
And God will make divinely real,
The highest form of thine ideal.”

God's sacred shewbread in His Holy place still awaits the hungry soul.

III

Once more let this Christ-chosen incident throw light on the relation of the Sacred to the Secular. I suppose that if we saw things as angels do, we should never make that distinction at all. Indeed little children, who are nearer to the angels than we are, scarcely think of it. Brought up in a

Christian home, taught to pray as soon as they can lisp, they do not lose sight of the first cause amidst second causes. To their minds it is God Who sends the sunshine, lights the stars, speaks in the thunder, spreads their table, and sends His angels to watch over them when they sleep. It is perfectly natural to them that things should be sacred. But the world by wisdom knows not God, and some of us need to become fools that we may be wise. We are no longer priests in the Holy place, free to eat of the shewbread, but we stand outside hungry, doubting, afraid to touch it, unable indeed any longer to see it. Oh for the hand to give it to us, the priestly hand, the pierced hand! Oh for the hand to take it, gratefully, joyfully, adoringly! Dear brothers, who linger outside the tabernacle, there is truth to be known, pardon to be had, consolation to be enjoyed, hidden from you perhaps by a veil of unbelief, but not too sacred for your use, not too fenced off for you to gain, not too fine to be used in ordinary life. And as your child at home naturally uses what is within his reach, and thinks that what belongs to you belongs to him, so if you have the childlike spirit you will feel that the whole world is your Father's house, and that in it there is bread enough and to spare.

Nothing short of what God gives can really

satisfy our deepest needs. When we are driven, as David's men were, by hostile forces, when deprived of what we once enjoyed, when confronted by hardships and starving for sympathy, we do not gain much help from worldly maxims. It is no great comfort to a starving man to be told that others are worse off than he; it does not assuage the sorrow of one bereaved to be reminded that man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward. These are the husks which swine may eat. But we feed on true bread from the sanctuary, when we know that our Father cares for us, that He makes all things work together for good, and that even the Man of Sorrows, Who was acquainted with grief, was the well-beloved Son in Whom the Father was well pleased. You have come here that you may be reminded of this, that you may eat of the shewbread which nourished the saints, and which may still be found in the presence of God. And to know that God forgives you, loves you, means to help and deliver you, is not only food for priests, but food which will fit you to become priests and to dwell always in the Divine presence, illumined by holy light, and offering the incense of prayer.

Do not imagine then that what you hear about in the service of the sanctuary is only meant for sacred places, or only appropriate to Sabbath

days, that it is lawful for the priests only. You, who are most conscious of spiritual poverty and unworthiness, have a right to the highest truths and the loftiest fellowship, and if you claim it in faith and penitence the great High Priest Himself shall press the shewbread into your hands. Thus strengthened, you may go back to what you call secular to make it sacred, writing, "Holiness unto the Lord on the bells of the horses, and the pots and pans of the household," as the prophet Zechariah foretold. Just as David's soldiers after eating the sacred shewbread went back to their hiding-places, or marched forward to the fight in the strength of it, so you may go to your duties as a citizen, as a tradesman, as a clerk, as a housekeeper, as a lawyer, a doctor, as husband or wife, daughter or son, stronger, braver, purer from communion with God. Inspiration is as much needed for daily duty as for preaching the gospel. The highest worship is to make you ready for the lowliest occupation. The divinest strength may be employed in the commonest tasks. Carry the sacred shewbread into all your wanderings. Take with you the Lord Jesus Christ as you walk through the cornfield. And all duty shall be sacred, all pleasure wholesome, and every rough wind shall become a song.

The table is spread in the Holy place, the shew-

bread is waiting for hungering souls. Therefore do not delay till your hunger is of a different kind, or till you can regard yourself as a holy priest, not a wandering outlaw. Let every want—let any want bring you in prayer to God, though it be want of success, want of love, want of food; for if you come with these in prayer to Him, a consciousness of still higher needs will be aroused, and you will learn in the fullest sense to rise on stepping-stones of your dead selves to higher things.

VIII

SERVICE IN A LOWLY SPHERE

"If I cannot realise my Ideal,
I can at least idealise my Real."

GANNETT.

"Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God."—I COR. vii. 24.

IT is not easy to every one to display the virtue of contentment. To be conscious of possessing powers which one never has an opportunity of exercising, naturally arouses restlessness or despondency. The position of a slave, for example, in apostolic times must have been galling in the extreme. He might be, and often was, far superior to his owner in capacity and in culture, and yet had nothing he could call his own. But even he was exhorted, as a Christian, to serve the Lord Christ in the position he occupied, and to do so with cheerfulness and goodwill. Instead of struggling for his freedom, and so embittering his own lot, and that of other slaves, by a hopeless

servile war, Paul urged that he should remain in the position he occupied when he was called to spiritual freedom. In his letter to the Church at Corinth, addressing slaves as well as citizens, the circumcised and the uncircumcised, Christians married and single, he said, "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called." In other words, whether Christians are engaged in the doing of things great or small, they are to do them contentedly and devoutly, as part of their ministry unto the Lord. All is of His appointment, and all may be for His glory. He is glorified in us whenever and however our characters are developed and ennobled.

Most of us are slow to believe that God calls to duty as well as to distinction, and that His estimate of the value of any service differs widely from that of the world. He knows what our special possibilities are, and never expects greater results than are fairly commensurate with them. The man who is faithful with only two talents has precisely the same reception and reward, from the all-seeing Judge, as the man who is faithful in the use of his five talents. In fact he deserves it, at least equally,—for probably he has triumphed over stronger temptations. It is less easy for him than for a man more richly endowed to abide contentedly in the place of his calling, and to put

his whole heart into the work which has been appointed for him ; because restlessness and discontent, those twin spirits of evil, constantly strive to turn him aside from duty.

I

It may be well, therefore, to confront the temptations which come to those who are only called to the ministry of little things, and to strip off the disguises of those spirits of evil who too often approach us as if they were angels of light.

It seems to be natural and excusable, for example, that those who are called on to fill lowly spheres in life should feel envious of others who do not appear to be more deserving of prominence and of public appreciation than themselves. Have we not ourselves met with this temptation and succumbed to it? Have we not sometimes said or thought of others, "Their gifts may be more showy than ours, but they are not more valuable; their position has come to them far more by the accident of birth, or by favouritism, than by essential worth. If we had only enjoyed their chance we could have done better work than they do. Why then should they have all the plums, while we have none? How can we account for such unfairness in the distribution of life's oppor-

tunities? Is there a God that judgeth in the earth?"

This temptation to envy is specially strong to those who in a lowly position make possible the success of others who, appearing in the light of publicity, get and keep all the credit of it. The Cabinet Minister, who triumphantly replies to his opponents in Parliament, probably owes all the information which makes his answer effective to a permanent official, who is so completely in the background that his very name is unknown to the public. The successful man of business makes a fortune not infrequently through the capacity or industry of those who have little or no share in the profits. The small capitalist may become a millionaire through the inventive genius of a poor man, who dies in obscurity. In such cases, it is peculiarly difficult to rejoice in another's success, or even to be content with it. Indeed, even to those engaged in religious work the same temptation comes. It is the exceptional Christian who can be honestly glad over successful work when it is done by another who appears to be his competitor, and who never feels a twinge of envy when a fellow-teacher or a brother-minister is more popular than himself. Yet God's grace can enable His own children to love their neighbours as themselves, and to resist the temptation to envy and resent-

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ment, even when the success of others proves to be for their own disadvantage. It is a sign of moral greatness to be able, under such circumstances, to say in Browning's words—

“So I forget my ruin, and rejoice
In thy success, as thou! Let our God's praise
Go bravely through the world at last! What care
Through me or thee?”

Think too of the temptation to indolence which assails a man whose work seems to him hardly worth the doing. Our Lord hinted at this in His well-known parable of the Talents, for it is the servant with only one talent who is represented as hiding it in the earth, instead of employing it for his master. Examples of such neglect are frequent in ordinary life. The girl who has musical taste, but no great talent, will often refuse to keep up what she knows because she will never to be able to do brilliantly what would nevertheless give pleasure to those at home. Of course we admit that it is foolish to waste time in attempting what is altogether beyond one's powers (and some have no musical ear at all); but this does not excuse any from refusing to be useful and helpful because they cannot be distinguished. The sin of neglecting one talent lay in the fact that the servant had one talent which he might either neglect or use.

Again, there are many who, in a commercial or

professional career, are called to a post where drudgery is more obvious than recognition and reward. Unless they are able to accept their work as of God's appointment, and to believe that development of character may be as great a reward as an increase of income, they are likely to regard duty as hardly worth while, and do it carelessly, without heartiness or thoroughness. Thus the ideal becomes insensibly lowered from what it was at first, and the service of earth is no longer such a preparation for the service of heaven as it was meant to be.

II

How then can we resist these and other temptations? What encouragements can we think of which may help us to continue steadily and cheerfully in our ministry of little things?

1. We may bethink ourselves of the value of unseen work in spheres outside our own. Foundations are more important than pinnacles, though no one sees them, and few people think about them. And this may be regarded as an axiom capable of application in all directions. The nobility of a nation depends on the homes of its people, in which quiet and unrecognised work is done by mothers and sisters. Commercial

prosperity rests on the strenuous efforts of obscure toilers who are far from receiving what is their fair share of the wealth thus created. The harvest of political success, according to a recent and popular phrase, results only from "spade work" in the various constituencies. And a church prospers not because of the brilliant gifts of its leaders, but as the result of consistency and brotherliness on the part of its members.

2. Think too of the effect of obscure and even menial work in preparing men for what is higher. Go into an engineer's shop, and notice the begrimed hands and faces of fitters and turners as they are busy in their toil; and perhaps you will be surprised to learn that some of these at least are men of culture, perhaps of university training, yet they are undertaking every day toilsome manual labour, because it is necessary to fit them to take the lead of others, as heads of some firm, whose fame may be world-wide. We are all familiar with this in the spheres of human industry, and we have good reason to believe that the principle holds good in every sphere of Divine service; and he that is faithful in a few things will, on account of his fidelity, become a ruler over many things, in a realm unseen and eternal.

3. This reminds us that God Himself notices the ministry which man often shrinks from, or despises.

We find it difficult to believe this, or at least to realise it. We naturally judge Him and His ways from our own experiences, and our knowledge is severely limited, for we cannot be always watchful, nor constantly conscious, nor everywhere present; and finite as we are it is impossible for us to comprehend the infinite. Therefore we are slow to accept Christ's teaching about the Father Who seeth in secret, and Who will at last reward openly those who are loyal in service. But the assurance is trustworthy, for it comes through One Who was in the bosom of the Father, and has revealed Him as He really is, so that accepting Him as an infallible teacher we may take up our duties each day, and discharge the small responsibilities of humdrum experience, as those consciously in the presence of God, and who strive in everything to please Him.

4. We may be helped still further if we reflect that the well-beloved Son, in Whom the Father was well pleased, of His own free will undertook precisely such duties, and thus made them sacred to us who are His followers. We all believe that Jesus Christ lived on earth the ideal life. It is the highest and holiest ambition possible to any of us that we may become like Him. And this applies to the life that now is, as well as to the life that is to come. But most of His time on earth was

spent in duties which many of us shrink from, or regard as too menial for us to undertake. As a little boy He would willingly be at His mother's beck and call, fetching water from the well, or doing anything else which might relieve her ; for the one fragment of information we have about that period of His life is that He went to Nazareth, and was there subject unto His parents. Nor was it only as a child that He was thus occupied. Among His neighbours, during His youth and early manhood He was known as "The Carpenter," and Holman Hunt's famous picture, "The Shadow of the Cross," which represents Him as a working man, stretching Himself wearily after bending over the bench, surrounded by the implements of His trade, sufficiently indicates what in His great condescension the Son of God appeared to be among men. It is true that when He was thirty years of age He began to be recognised as the Good Physician and the Great Teacher come from God ; but even then He showed again and again that He did not despise the ministry of little things. Not only did He go out fishing with the sons of Zebedee, but on one memorable occasion He stooped to wash His disciples' feet, cheerfully discharging the duties of a slave, from which they were shrinking. And by this act He not only rebuked their pride and ambition, but He gave

dignity and sacredness to the menial duties of domestic servants, and the despised ministries of wives and mothers in obscure homes. In His name then to all engaged in the ministry of little things I would give the message of a modern poetess—

“Wilt see thyself to Godlike stature grown?
Feed full thy soul on strong humility!
Then shalt thou on thy sordid lot look down,
Make thou thy life, and not thy life make thee.”

I hope that we all recognise that in the church, as well as outside it, offices and duties and spheres are appointed by God. He gives to every man his work, though the work differs as does that in a vineyard, to which He likened it, and he who mends the wall does Him service equally with him who gathers the fruit. Some positions in the church are prominent, as that of a city set on a hill, which cannot be hid. Those who occupy them have cares and anxieties which often more than outweigh outward honours or fleeting popularity. As the old refrain has it—

“Were every man’s internal care
Imprinted on his brow,
How many would our pity share
Who have our envy now.”

And temptations come to these which are both strong and insidious—temptations to self-confidence,

to boastfulness, to worldiness, and not least to disobedience to the mandate in verse 23, "Do not let yourselves become slaves to men." Think of popular preachers, of church dignitaries, of much-sought-after evangelists, and pray God that they may be kept from such evils. And think of missionaries in certain fields of labour where they are looked up to by native converts as almost infallible advisers, as rulers, and as examples, whose lowest standard of living will be their highest. Thank God for the grace which does keep them and inspire them, and pray that their standard may never be lowered, and that their spiritual life may not be weakened amid all the influences which tend to enervate it. "Having done all to stand" is a clarion call which they above others must ever heed.

But many who serve God just as faithfully as these are hidden in obscure spheres, in out-of-the-way places of which the world never hears. Amid the general restlessness of the age they are specially tempted to ignore the message of my text. It does not forbid readiness to move elsewhere when God calls, but it does urge content until that call comes. For no one is to neglect the work that lies to hand, while looking over it, to that which imagination or ambition depicts. I call on you for sympathy with these brethren,

some of them foremost in scholarship and self-consecration though little known and appreciated. They see the young converts who are just beginning to help in the work of the Church rushing off to some great city, where too often they lapse into indolence and even indifference. They are never cheered by the sight of a new friendly face, or by the handclasp of one who can appreciate their highest and best. They are often hurt by excellent people who have some spirituality but no sensitiveness, and regard faithfulness as a synonym for rudeness. Their income is so small that even daily bread is hard to get, and a suitable education for the children is outside the bounds of possibility. Thank God they are often cheered by remembering that Christ Jesus Himself was a poor evangelist and a village preacher, and that He was pre-eminently "the Beloved Son in Whom the Father was well pleased." And some of these, by abiding in the place where they have been called, have so developed their faculties and so improved their quiet season that in God's good time they have become the inspiring teachers of the world.

The secret and special solace which comes to these brethren is free to you also, who whether in the world or in the church are restless. It lies in the last two words of my text, "Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide *with God*."

To be with Him consciously day by day is to make all duty possible, all responsibility light, and all places and things sacred. And His Presence He has promised in His own words, "I am with you always." Just as the disciples found the cornfield to be a Temple, and the rough sea became a song, and the very streets seemed sacred when Jesus was beside them; so you may go on to the trivial duties of the home, to the worrying work of your business, to the obscure service of the Church, brave, cheerful, and reverent, because you have been taught to obey the command, "Let each man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God."

IX

HOME LIFE

"Children are God's apostles, day by day
Sent forth to preach of love, and hope, and peace."
LOWELL.

"When my children were about me."—JOB xxix. 5.

THIS Book of Job is an ancient and marvellous drama. It still throbs with human passion. It is still lit up by Divine light. Far away and strange though the scenery of it seems to be, the man himself who is the centre of the tragedy appears to be very like ourselves, in his mental conflicts and in his sad experiences. We can reach across the wide gulf of the centuries and clasp hands with him, and feel the better for it. Differences in culture and civilisation, and still deeper differences in knowledge of God and of His ways, do not affect our real oneness with him, which lies in our common grasp upon the living God.

This man is represented as looking back with sadness upon days gone by, when his children—

seven sons and three daughters—were about him, as happy a family as ever lived. He could recall days of sweet fellowship when they joined in acts of worship, and, according to the custom of the time, the father, priest of his own house, offered burnt-offerings “according to the number of them all,” by which he dedicated each one of them afresh to Jehovah, as a living sacrifice. And this he had not failed to do on the woeful day when they all met in their eldest brother’s house, and in the midst of their festivities, by a sudden tempest, the house fell in disastrous ruin, and every one of the young folk was killed. Up till now Job had silently received the news that all his property had gone, and that, rich though he had been, he now was poor as any wandering nomad; but now he broke out into a cry, a cry not of reproach but of trust, which is still echoed by Christian souls amid their losses: “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” The tragedy made its mark upon him for life, brave, patient, and pious though he was, and it was with sadness that amid his talkative friends he looked back to the happy home which had once been his and cried, “Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me, when His light shined upon my head, and when my children were about me.”

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In this old picture of happy family relationships, enjoyed for a time and then sadly broken up, let us seek some helpful suggestions amidst our own experiences.

I

The patriarch evidently appreciated the blessedness and helpfulness of home, and surely it is good when the children are about us. Too often now the responsibilities of family life are dreaded, and even repudiated, and the best classes in English society, who have constituted and still constitute the moral strength of the nation, are becoming fewer and less influential; and this is a cause of profound anxiety to true lovers of their country, for have not most of the great thinkers, the noblest statesmen, and the saviours of society come from homes where, in the happy relationships of parents and children, brothers and sisters, each has learned to sympathise and serve with beautiful forgetfulness of self? Indeed, true home life is what angels must most of all rejoice over, as oases amid the desert of human selfishness. The father sharing his sons' sports and struggles; the mother bending over the books her children study when the shutters are closed and the lamps are lit, have about them indescribable charm. Intelligence is quickened and sympathies are broadened as these

live their youth over again in the lives of their children.

“Sweet is the smile of home, the mutual look,
Where hearts are of each other sure ;
Sweet all the joys that crowd the household nook,
The haunt of all affections pure.”

In the present day we find it more difficult than it was in a simpler state of society to have the children about us. Travelling is so easy and convenient ; the residence is so often quite at a distance from the business ; the claims on one's energies are so numerous and so clamant, that to get a quiet time with our own dear ones demands some forethought and planning. But it deserves to be planned for, so rich will it prove in result. And to every parent I would fain say, at all costs keep in touch with your children, and do not let even the work of the Church make you sacrifice that. No doubt schools are far more efficient and attractive than they used to be, but even the wisest and the most sympathetic teacher can never take the place of the father and mother, or do their work. And if this is true of ordinary education given for six days, by trained teachers, it is obviously true of religious instruction given for half an hour on a Sunday afternoon, by those who for the most part have had no special training for their work. If this country is to be what it has

been in the past, if as a nation we are to stand in the premier rank of civilised Christian people, the home must be made far more of than it is to-day. Even intelligent and religious people, with noble ideals, who have served the nation well, have sometimes suffered from such neglect of duty. It is said that John Howard, who visited and reformed the prisons of Europe, had the shame and sorrow of seeing his own son go to ruin as the result of his neglected home. And if this were true of a man so well occupied, what shall be said of women in society, or of men involved in too numerous engagements, who seldom see their children except when they are asleep, who never care for and plan for happy family gatherings, and who never get a quiet talk about things of the higher life. Are there not many who will have to confess to the great Lord and Master of us all, "They made me a keeper of vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept"?

How much influence for good they lose, and how much of the truest and purest happiness! Nothing can make up for such a loss. You may have heard the story Lowell tells of an ancient prophet who made a pilgrimage far into the wilderness till he reached Mount Sinai. He had been conscious of the loss of God's presence, and felt sure that he would find it again there if anywhere. He stood on

the hillside and prayed for a sign that God was near. He heard no thunder-peal, and did not even feel the stir of a breeze. But suddenly he noticed a tuft of grass at his feet which burst open, and from its midst a sweet violet sprang forth. Then he remembered that as he was leaving home his little daughter ran up and gave him a bunch of those very flowers. They grew just outside his own door. He passed them every time he crossed the threshold, and he had no need to come so far to find them. In seeking the distant he had lost the near; and now he learned that God was to be found, and served, not on the barren mount, but at home amid the children, and he humbly acknowledged his blindness of heart, saying—

“Had I trusted in my nature,
And had faith in lowly things,
Thou Thyself wouldst then have sought me
And set free my spirit's wings.”

See that your children are about you, dear fathers and mothers, instead of letting them pick up less helpful companions than you would be. Seek to have them with you in the house of God, that you may have your religious interests in common, and do you young people respond to such loving influence, and even though there may be some sacrifice of taste and preference, let the family be together in worship, as in love.

II

But we are reminded by my text that such happy associations are often broken up. It was not by choice, or preference, but by what Job would gladly have averted that he had to mourn for the days when the children were about him, but were so no more. With him it was a past felicity, as it is with many of us.

From the nature of things this must be so. As we get on in life the prattle of children's voices, the timid knock at the bedroom door, the joyful clamorous entry, the early morning romp, are only memories. The children are children no more, though to some extent they will always seem to be children to the fathers and mothers. Very natural was it, though rather startling, when in a crowded assembly the mother of one of the foremost preachers of the day hurried up to me with her face aglow with love as she eagerly asked, "Have you seen my Jack?" Still, think of them as we may, they become men and women almost before we notice it, with plans of their own, work of their own, perhaps homes of their own, and then it is well if with thankfulness, not with regret, we think of the time "when the children were about us."

This natural change which comes from development, of course we would not have otherwise, so

long as the old affection remains. For there are loves which never die. They enter into the very fabric of the soul, and are like cloth dyed ingrain, in which the tint is not lost so long as two threads hold together.

You young people, with that sort of filial love, will not hasten the day of separation from any wish to cast off the sweet bonds of home; for, believe me, you will never have happier days than those of your childhood, if your home is what God meant it to be. But you will have to leave it one day; perhaps to win a name for yourself, which will make the old people more proud and happy than any success they ever won themselves, and then it may be your joy and privilege to return, in some degree, what you had so freely given to you when you were able to do very little for yourselves. Like Joseph, you will be proud if you can bring your father, and brothers, and sisters into some land of Goshen, over which God has given you control. The demands of duty, the necessities of work, sooner or later take every one of us from childhood's home, and this is good and right, for life, which at first seems brilliant and beautiful, a very paradise of pleasure, is ordained of God to become a wrestling ground, where turf and daisies are trampled under foot as we strain and strive; thus developing powers which we should not have

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without such struggle. Yet when you transform the garden into the arena, carry the old love with you, and see that it never dies.

But death is more inexorable than duty in the breaking up of home. Who is there that does not know it from sad experience? How many have seen their dear ones pass away into the invisible, and have tried to assuage their grief by saying, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." Some of you to-day are sorrowful over the loss of one who all through her life was a comfort and a stay to you and to others. Bright in intelligence, rich in resource, capable and willing in the service of the needy, brave without brag, pitiful without sentimentalism, loving and loyal to her heart's core, you cannot but miss her sadly—as many others do—but the happy spirit still lives, rescued from the body with its suffering and weariness, absent from the body, at home with the Lord.

"When the rest of Faith is ended, and the rest in Hope is
past,

The rest of Love remaineth—Sabbath of our Life at last.
No more fleeting hours, hurrying down the day,
But golden stillness of glory, never to pass away!
Time, with its pressure of moments, mocking us as they
fell

With relentless beat of a footstep, hour by hour the knell
Of a hope, or an aspiration, then shall have passed
away,
Leaving a grand calm leisure—leisure of endless day."

Blessed be God there is hope for the future, as well as thankfulness for the past; and we look onward, as well as backward, while we think of the time when our children are about us.

III

But if it be true that home relationships here, however happy, must be broken up, let us use to the full the opportunities they present while they are still with us. Job seems to have had no cause for regret in that respect. According to the light given him in those dim days, he prayed with his children, offered sacrifices for them, watched for any injurious outgrowth in character, and was true to his trust as far as he knew how. Wherever he was he erected his altar, and ever dwelt in the secret place of the Most High. And because his God was a God of love, love reigned in that family as it ever should do in ours. In His name I appeal to you parents to rule your household as God's representatives; and this will only be possible as you really resemble Him in character. Children are keen to detect a false ring in our talk, even though it may pass muster in the world outside. And all too quickly an atmosphere of unreality, of suspicion, and of jealousy, or of irreligion at home, will cause degeneration in moral character

among the inmates, and destroy the effect of any tonic public worship may have supplied. Therefore, in character, and in words also, seek to be witnesses for God when the children are about you. How can you, as a professing Christian, keep silence over what will affect the eternal destinies of those entrusted to you? It may be that some of you have neglected, and are still neglecting this, your chief duty. You clothe your children, but not with righteousness; you feed them, but not with the Bread of Life; you educate them, but have not taught them to recognise the claims of God; you make them ready for business, but not for heaven. Yet these children are now plastic, as they will soon cease to be. As the footprint of a wild bird which passed across the beach in the old old times, when the rock was soft, left a mark for ever on what has since hardened into stone, so the result of your neglect, or of your fidelity, nothing will obliterate. Therefore, write wisely and well on the fleshy tables of your children's hearts.

IV

We work for a future, for the better Home which still awaits the children of God. If He was kind enough to provide such a home as you have enjoyed, surely you may trust Him to provide

something even better for you and your dear ones, when all have passed away into a sphere invisible, but real and near. The words of Jesus, the King of Truth, who came from the Father and returned to the Father, are worthy of implicit credence. You may rest your souls on them. "In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." And He Whose early happiness was found in a mother's love, He Who gave back by His miracles to the joys of home life every one He restored to health and sanity, knows that we shall need, and that we long for another "home," better, purer, more durable than any on earth. And—

"God does not bid thee wait,
To disappoint at last."

As we look onward into that sphere which we know many dear to us have entered, we are conscious of our ignorance, we feel that we can only walk by faith and not by sight, but if with each of us our faith means a real grip on God's hand, it is enough. We see nothing clearly of that great "cloud of witnesses." To us as yet it is only like that background in one of Raphael's wonderful pictures, which seems at first sight nothing but a bright mist, but when we are able to look more closely it appears full of calm, sweet angel faces.

Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down in despondency, and strengthen the feeble knees, that you may walk onward cheerily and bravely, and in God's good time you will be ready to follow those who have already entered the home above.

“And when the Lord shall summon us,
Whom thou hast left behind,
May we, untainted by the world,
As sure a welcome find !
May each, like thee, depart in peace,
To be a glorious guest
Where the wicked cease from troubling
And the weary are at rest.”

X

BUSINESS INTEGRITY

"The man of life upright, whose cheerful mind is free
From weight of impious deeds and yokes of vanity ;
That man needs neither towers nor armour for defence."

CAMPION.

"Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small. Thou shalt not have in thine house divers measures, a great and a small. But thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have : that thy days may be lengthened in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. For all that do such things, and all that do unrighteously, are an abomination unto the Lord thy God."—DEUT. xxv. 13-16.

INTEGRITY in Modern Business is a subject well within the sphere of religious teaching, and the Bible has far more to say about it than is generally supposed. Inspired men often allude to trade as a necessary part of life's experience, and they constantly urge that in it we should seek to obey the two fundamental laws of God's Kingdom—"thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart," and "thy neighbour as thyself." And it is tacitly assumed in Scripture

that the exchange of goods is for the world's advantage, that those who carry it on are benefactors of the race, and that in it they may do the will of God on earth, as angels do it in heaven.

Now trade, like all else, has its own special temptations, and these naturally differ in form, in different ages and countries. Amid sparse populations, and in primitive times, wrong-doing was more simple than it is now. In them a dishonest trader would perhaps use a shekel weight which was a little under standard, or a cubit measure about the eighth of an inch short, and would thus rob his customer by the false weights and measures sternly condemned in the Pentateuch and in the Book of Proverbs. To save himself from exposure he would keep within reach a full weight or measure, in order to slip it out if a keen customer came in, or if the visit of an inspector (if they had inspectors) was threatened, and these "divers"—or different—"weights" were declared to be "an abomination to the Lord"—for He is a God of truth and equity. And I cannot help thinking that the prosperity of the Jews, in spite of the hatred, the hindrances, and the persecutions they have had to confront, is largely due to the early and persistent drilling they received in the principles of sound commerce. But whether integrity pays or not, the standard of rectitude never

changes ; and we who are Christians are emphatically taught that it is at our peril that we divorce religion from business. Those who do this, work more injury to the cause of religion than any number of sermons can set right.

Very significant is the oft-told story of the village grocer, professedly a religious man, who asked his boy-assistant whether he had sanded the sugar, and, receiving an affirmative answer, said, "Then you can come in to prayers." Probably the story is apocryphal, but at least it serves to exhibit the scorn which is justly felt by honest men, who make no profession of religion, for those who sit in the sanctuary on the Sunday, but cheat their customers, or their agents, or their employers, during the week. Religion apart from morality is a curse rather than a blessing, and it is destined to perish through its inherent rottenness. The message of the Bible on this topic may be summed up in the words of Wolsey to Cromwell (though he himself learned it too late, and through bitter experience)—

"Be just and fear not :

Let all the ends thou aim'st at be thy country's,
Thy God's, and truth's."

I

Let me now refer to some temptations to wrongdoing, which some of you know of more than I.

A short experience many years ago in a business house, and an interested and sympathetic study of practical problems in commercial life during the course of a long ministry, have given me some knowledge, but I am willing to confess that it does not enable me to vie in knowledge with some who hear me. Yet, though the details of modern business are naturally less familiar to me, ministers probably see more clearly the principles underlying those details—just as an officer on a hill may see the progress of the fight better than the men who are actually fighting amid the smoke and din.

I am disposed to think that a high standard of commercial integrity is more difficult of attainment in a large city, and especially in London, than elsewhere; partly because the population is teeming and changeable.

What is the ideal of trade? It is this: the trader is an expert, able to judge the quality of the goods he buys and sells, and he uses his expert knowledge for the benefit of the customer, taking in return a fair profit, as the due reward of his knowledge and trouble. If, for example, you are buying clothing, or groceries, or furniture, you expect a tradesman to show and sell what you require, and are willing, or ought to be willing, to give him in exchange what will compensate him for his work and good judgment; and at the

same time will pay the legitimate cost of production. That I say is the ideal. But as things are, he sometimes finds it to his interest to sell that on which he gets most profit ; and you find it to your interest to strive for a bargain, even though the price you pay will not afford him fair compensation, nor cover the cost of production unless produced by sweated labour. And he, to guard himself against you, will either palm off inferior goods, or ask more than he expects to get. That is a fair sample, though perhaps a rough and ready one, of the mutual distrust which prevails sometimes though happily not always.

It may be said that such a way of carrying on business would not pay, and that is perfectly true where a man is known, or where he is dealing with regular customers. But in a large city many a tradesman depends on passing customers, whom he does not much expect to see again, and with these he certainly does not always find that honesty is the best policy, though he probably would in a village.

Besides, this wrong-doing becomes easier when a business does not remain long in the same hands, but is passed on, and intended to be passed on to others at enhanced value—to be sold perhaps to a limited liability company, whose shareholders know nothing of its value and care nothing about

its management so long as their dividends are paid. In many transactions of this kind the original directors and shareholders make far more than is reasonable or fair, over-capitalising the concern. Hence those who, at the market price of their shares, only get 4 per cent. (while the others clear say 40 per cent.) press for economical management, which means that old and trusted men are displaced by boys and by girls, who on a paltry wage would find it impossible to live, unless they were supported partly by their parents. In other words, they do not get a fair day's wage for a fair day's work, but the parents bear the burden which ought to belong to employers.

The larger the business which thus changes hands, the less the sense of responsibility among the directors, and in the amorphous body of shareholders there is no knowledge, no conscience, and no heart, though each one as an individual may be right-minded enough. And there are further complications. When companies are thus being floated, certain newspapers, often controlled by a syndicate, are bribed in various forms to assist in the operation, and men of high character and reputation are persuaded to act as decoys, though the promoters (clever scoundrels as some of them are) know from the first that the whole concern is rotten, and will go down as a miserable

wreck after they themselves have seized the cargo and left the ship. It seems to me that these gigantic syndicates are seriously threatening the well-being of society. Some of them control many newspapers which seem to be the voice of a multitude, when they are only a gigantic megaphone, the exaggerated voice of a small group of interested men. Others of them in commerce, by concentrating capital, can make corners in the necessities of life which are hostile to the interests of the community.

To prevent such combinations, or even to check them, seems at present impossible. In the industrial war now carried on, labour and capital will doubtless continue to organise, and both have an equal right to do so. On the one hand, efforts will be made to limit output, to compel men to work slackly (to ca' canny, as it is called), with the idea that more men will then get the chance of a job. On the other hand, syndicates, commanding enormous capital, will try to secure monopolies, to make corners in produce, and the like, until there will be no room for the independence of smaller men.

No one can foretell how these tendencies will end, but I believe that further development of the process is more probable than its repression, until the community, aghast at the growing wealth of the few and the deepening poverty of the many,

will take into its own hands the control of certain enterprises and the distribution of their profits. Be this as it may, there can be no doubt about the growing power of a selfish individualism, which is creating enormous fortunes, side by side with grinding and hopeless poverty, until the words of Jesus, "The poor have good news preached to them," seem a bitter irony in Christian England; for in modern society there is little "good news" for the poor.

I do not wonder that heathen peoples sometimes hold up our social condition to scorn. The gifted Japanese writer, Lafcadio Hearn, for example, speaks with the utmost contempt of the religion which we profess to be the inspiration of our progress, the basis of our welfare. "English streets," he says, "tell me a different story: there are no such sights to be seen in Buddhist cities. No: this civilisation signifies a perpetual wicked struggle between the simple and the cunning, the feeble and the strong—force and craft combining to thrust weakness into a yawning and visible hell. Never in Japan has there been even the sick dream of such a condition."

How can we expect such people to welcome our faith when that is their view of its visible effects, and when there is so much to make those words I have quoted seem as true as they are bitter?

The reign of this selfish individualism must come to an end, and make way for a Christianised socialism, in which men will learn to look not only on their own things, but every man also on the things of others. It is as much for the interests of men, as for the glory of God, that every member of the body politic should care for the good of the whole body; and towards this all professedly Christian men are bound to press, meanwhile themselves refusing to yield to any temptation which would do a wrong to their fellows, and dishonour Him Whom they call their Lord.

II

What, then, will help us to this? Well, one of the chief restraints against wrong-doing lies in a fresh realisation of the fact that God takes note of the conduct of men in business. If no part of our life is hidden from Him, that which is ordinary (which constitutes the chief part of it) is not outside His purview. Our Lord teaches us that not a bird falls to the ground without the Father's knowledge. The microscope reveals the fact that the smallest creatures are perfected in shape and often radiant in beauty. And we by prayer must seek to realise that God is acquainted with all *our* ways—that just as we may get on a negative in the camera what is too small to be seen by the

unaided eye, so every act in business, in home, or in the Church is photographed on the mind of the Eternal.

If, for example, you have a chance of making money wrongfully, bethink yourself that God knows it. The temptation may be terrific, and it often is. Perhaps it does not require an actual lie, perhaps it would be yielded to without the smallest compunction by your rival, perhaps you know that if you succumb to it, it will enable you to give your wife some needed comfort and your children a better education. Still, knowing that it is not the right thing to do, you resist ; and He Who saw and rewarded the heroes of old who waxed valiant in fight will not fail to give you some reward, perhaps in the strengthening and ennobling of your character, and in fitness for a higher service.

The converse is true. There are professedly religious men, the more trusted on that very account, who take advantage of another to his impoverishment and their own enrichment. They pass muster even in religious circles, for their methods of wrong-doing are refined, or secret, or perhaps usual. Though they oppress their employees, or gamble in differences, though they habitually do much that is doubtful, they become rich and influential, but though they live in honour amongst men, sooner or later they will be in a hell

of remorse and retribution. For shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

I do beg you not to lose faith in the Omniscience of God. Be not among the multitude who judge of conduct solely by the standard of ordinary practices and popular theories; for though we live in a Christian land, we are in the midst of a godless civilisation. Be it yours to remember that there *is* a God, that to Him the night shines as the day, and that He will not alter the laws of righteousness, nor be misled by common practices, nor be deceived by religious professions, but steadfastly calls on every one of you to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.

It is "by the fear of the Lord that men depart from iniquity," and in every moral conflict you may be made safe by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left.

I can imagine that some are asking themselves, "What are we to do? We admit that commercial morality is low, that much which is done in ordinary business is not up to the standard of true righteousness; but we are powerless." Are you? I venture to say that you are not! If all honest and right-minded men combined to put down any evil, or any doubtful practice, they would prove irresistible. How was it with Tammany in New York a few years ago? There has

seldom been a wickeder or stronger combination than that of those unscrupulous men who enriched themselves by the plunder of the community, and who protected the haunts of evil they were bound to put down, because they were bribed to leave them alone. That seemingly resistless organisation of evil was swept away in a month by the uprising of righteous men, who said among themselves we will not tolerate this scandal any longer. Similarly, we as religious men should see to it that for all places of trust, in municipal bodies, in Parliament, in trades unions, in chambers of commerce, and the like, men are chosen who are lovers of righteousness and defenders of the poor; for they can serve God in such capacities as truly as if they taught in a Sunday school or preached the gospel.

Besides this, individual employers may do much for the maintenance of integrity in modern business. Suppose that it became the ambition of young men and women looking for a situation always by preference to get into offices or warehouses conducted by Christian men, because they were sure that these were conducted humanely, kindly, justly, and on Christian principles, would not that be a new evidence that the Kingdom of Christ was coming? But if in businesses controlled by nominal Christians, considerations of even-handed justice, of kindly recognition of faithful

service, of care for the comfort and well-being of the young people employed—if these, I say, are notoriously disregarded, it makes religion stink in the nostrils of the people.

Further, may not customers do much to bring about a more wholesome state of things? Deal with people who, you know, are good to their employees, who are straightforward and fair dealing, even though it be at some inconvenience and loss to yourself. Abjure bargain-hunting. If you cannot afford to pay a fair price for a thing, go without it till you can, for otherwise it is useless to whimper over the starvation and misery of women workers. Cultivate mutual confidence in business, as you do in the home. For my own part, I have no sympathy with Brunel when he said his motto in life was this: "Trust no man till he has proved himself honest." Far better surely is George Stevenson's reply: "I trust every one till he has shown himself to be dishonest."

But so far as in us lies let us deal with those who are worthy of confidence and give them confidence, and in the long-run mutual trust will bring about the solution of many difficulties and the removal of many temptations.

Well, dear brothers, be your position prominent or obscure, pray for grace that amid prevailing temptations you may yourselves be honest, fair, and

straight. Some of you are in positions where absolute integrity seems hardly possible, and where human sympathy and co-operation cannot be had, but the Christ Who fought the devil in the wilderness is beside you when you fight the devil in the city. He will cover your head in the day of battle, and in the issue, when life's fight is over, you will find, as He did, that the devil will depart and angels will come to minister unto you.

XI

LOYAL FRIENDSHIPS

“Nor lack I Friends long-tried and near and dear,
Whose love is round me like this atmosphere,
Warm, soft, and golden.—For such gifts to me
What shall I render, O my God, to Thee?”

WHITTIER.

“Thine own friend and thy father’s friend forsake not.”—
PROV. xxvii. 10.

FRIENDSHIP is one of God’s good angels sent for our help and comfort. And the loyalty urged upon us in our text is necessary if we would enjoy to the full the blessings it can bring. The man who is so fickle that his friend can never depend upon him, or he who readily takes offence and withdraws from kindly intercourse, impoverishes himself, while he causes pain to others. But when we are loyal to our friends, and they are loyal to us, our joys are doubled and our sorrows lessened, and many of us can thank God for sympathy and cheer, which have been our best tonic in times of weakness.

In the Book of Proverbs there are many

references to friendship, and Old Testament history brings before us some noble examples of self-sacrificing, heroic affection. There is no more exquisite story in literature than that of Jonathan and David, who were loyal to one another to the last, although they knew that the one would dispossess the other of his throne. And a parallel to this unexpected friendship lies in the relation of Paul and Onesimus, who were socially sundered as far as they well could be, for the one was a fugitive slave, and the other the foremost apostle of the Early Church. In both of these friendships there was a self-forgetfulness which was seldom insisted upon in the writings of pagan philosophers, though Aristotle devoted two books out of his nine on Ethics to the discussion of the subject. His notion of friendship was that it would naturally be based on consideration for one's own happiness and prosperity, whereas Christianity taught that the highest love lay in giving rather than in receiving; even though it sometimes poured itself out upon those who would repay nothing. Such friendship develops the loftiest graces, it trains for larger responsibility, and prepares for that service which belongs to "ministering spirits," in the more blissful conditions of the future life. Nowhere do you find friendship more loyal, sacred, and helpful than that which our Lord conferred on His disciples,

unworthy of it though they often proved themselves to be. He did not call them or treat them as slaves, but as personal friends, and in spite of their ill-desert He, having loved His own who were in the world, loved them to the end.

I wish to speak to you of such friendships, which indeed many of us share, and which we should all cultivate. I do not deny that there are friendships between some who are companions in wrong-doing, and that their loyalty to each other in some measure redeems them from utter depravity. And there are also friendships which rest on mutual interests, amongst those who fawn on prosperous men who may help them on in business, though they give a wide berth to their former friends who are not successful in anything.

It is not of these that I am thinking, but of genuine and Christian friendship, which leads a man from self-seeking to the service of others. Such a man is described in those lines which were familiar to some of us in childhood—

“I live for those that love me,
For those that know me true,
For the Heaven that smiles above me,
And awaits my coming too ;
For the cause that lacks assistance,
For the wrongs that need resistance,
For the future in the distance,
For the good that I can do.”

It is on the friendship which leads to such an avowal as that I address you.

I

It is not often that you meet a misanthrope who refuses to recognise the advantages of friendship. I do not know that I ever met one like Aureolus Paracelsus, whom Robert Browning so graphically portrayed. The poet represents him as able, chivalrous, and daring, but determined to do without human love, and his sad experience proved the wisdom of his comrade's question, or remonstrance, in which he asked—

“How can the course be safe which from the first
Produces carelessness to human love?”

No doubt a man may do a great work, and may fill a large sphere in history, without love, but in the deepest sense he will not be noble in character. Think, for example, of Napoleon Bonaparte. He probably surpassed all his contemporaries in genius he won victory after victory, and shook down all the thrones of Europe by his power. No one seemed able permanently to resist him until, in God's good providence, Waterloo was given as a crowning mercy—delivering Europe from the awful curse of being dominated by a conqueror

without a heart, and without faith either in man or God. It was a moral deliverance even more than a political one, for the rightful ruler of the world is a God of love, Who never meant that the nations should be beaten down, and kept down by brute force, but that they should constitute a human brotherhood, a family of God.

Every true friendship helps toward the realisation of this, and our natures become more divine as they open out in the sunshine of love. We all know that the second of the two great commandments is this: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," but in smaller spheres and more limited relationships this love needs to be and can be intensified. Jesus Christ Himself loved the world, and gave Himself for it, but He also had His intimates. He loved the Twelve more than the seventy; loved best three of the Twelve; loved John best of them all; and among the families which welcomed Him, He was most happy in the home of Bethany.

And this special intimacy is not always possible in family relationship. The truest sympathy may sometimes lie outside the home circle, as the text implies. Then instead of turning in the day of our calamity to a brother in blood, who is estranged from us in sympathy, we find that the "neighbour," the man near us in affectionate interest, is better than a brother "far off."

The best men need such true friendships.

In the present day there is some danger of our having many acquaintances and no intimate friends, and that is bad for any one, especially for young people whose affections, when at their best, need exercise and response in the home and often outside it too. We meet more people than our fathers met in business and in social life, so that casual acquaintance is increased enormously; but the friendships even of the Victorian Era are rarer now, and people do not know each other so intimately as once they did, partly from lack of time, or from the presence of crowds. It is in some measure because of this that unhappy marriages are sadly frequent, for knowledge of mutual tastes and conversations on the highest topics are difficult to secure in the rush of modern life. Some of the best and most helpful friendships are enjoyed by those who are far removed from each other in age. It seems to me that a father may be, and ought to be, the most trusty friend his sons can have, and that mothers should be the confidantes of their daughters, so that a right-minded girl may find her one and only confessional at her mother's knee. Indeed, I know some middle-aged people to whom certain lads and lassies unbosom themselves freely, confident of meeting sympathy and help. And this gives

tenderness to the older and wisdom to the younger.

Few pictures in ancient history are more charming than that of the friendship which existed between Socrates, with his ripe experience, and Alcibiades, with his youthful eagerness. How jealously the elder guarded the younger, and how passionately the younger loved the older. When the lad fell wounded at the battle of Potidæa, stalwart Socrates stood over him, and beat back the enemy, saving both his life and his arms, and when the Athenians were routed at Delium, Alcibiades, in his turn, covered the retreat of the master he loved. It was typical of mutual defence, inspired by mutual love, which is often seen in moral conflicts still, even when there is great disparity in age. And I would call on you to thank God if you have one real friend to whom you can speak with absolute freedom, certain that your confidence will be respected; a friend on whom you can rest your weight when overburdened with trouble or anxiety, and who, like Jonathan, will strengthen your hands in God. Such friendship will enlarge your sympathies, rub off the angularities of your character, and develop in you what is Christ-like.

If we possess true friends, let us see to it that we do not alienate them. I fear that we are apt to

forget that little courtesies at home and among our companions help in the maintenance of affection and confidence. Even carelessness in the matter of correspondence will sometimes cause misunderstanding, or at least will break the electric current of intelligent sympathy. If you are a son or daughter away from home, it is your bounden duty to keep those you love in touch with your doings, that they may follow you in thought and prayers. And if you have neglected this, you can hardly use an hour of the Sabbath day better than by writing to express the affection you feel, and this will maintain the interest which you are in danger of losing. The fact is that some expression of love is required for the maintenance of it; and the silly reserve, the shyness, the pride, which prevents the frank utterance of deeper feelings, often does more harm than we imagine. In the *Life and Letters of Robert Browning*, Mrs. Sutherland Orr tells us that Thomas Carlyle privately, and with unusual warmth, expressed intense admiration for that poet's words, but he never did him the service of telling the world what he thought. And when Browning had Carlyle's rather extravagant eulogium repeated to him, he said, "Ah, if only those words had been uttered more publicly, what good they would have done me!" We are not Brownings or Carlyles, and our influence does not

go very far, but in our smaller spheres we may at least learn sometimes to speak or write a few words of appreciation which will put a new song into the mouth of one who is heavy-hearted. From the vice of flattery let us pray to be kept free, but let us also see to it that we do not keep all expressions of love and appreciation till those who needed them have gone beyond the reach of our praise and blame. A kindly word ought not to be reserved as an epitaph for a tombstone!

II

There are some things which may be reasonably expected in a genuine friendship.

I. Mutual confidence, for example, lies at its very base—and distinguishes it from acquaintance. We do not tell the secrets of our hearts and homes to everybody, “wearing our hearts upon our sleeve for chattering jays to pick at.” But if a friend has been chosen, especially in the closest relationship of courtship and marriage, there should be the frankness of perfect trust.

“Fix on thy friend, deliberate with thyself,
Pause, ponder, sift, not eager in the choice,
Nor jealous of the chosen ; fixing, fix ;
Judge before friendship ; then confide till death.”

There are certain experiences which, if kept absolutely to ourselves, would eat our heart like a canker, and the mere telling of them relieves the aching; and the fact of doing so becomes another cord to bind together more tightly the hearts of two friends. This is one of the many advantages of married life. There should be no secrets between husband and wife, and no blabbing, for it is rightly said of the excellent woman: "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her." And what is true of her should be equally true of him.

2. But, however close the relationship, forbearance is necessary, for none of us are perfect. It is not possible, therefore, to be on intimate terms with another, unless one is ready to make allowance for imperfections, and to forgive little offences. In every relationship, whether that of husband and wife, parent and child, minister and church, master or mistress and servant, friend and friend, we must bear and forbear. We must pray for grace to allow for differences of temperament, and even for failings and faults. In his *Recreations of a Country Parson*, A. K. H. B. suggested that the first time we recognise a fault in our friend we may perhaps be angry, but that afterwards we should make a mental note of that, as one of his characteristics, his idiosyncrasies, with which we must never feel vexed again, as if it were something not to be expected

of him. Perhaps we find it difficult to be as philosophical as that. Too often, indeed, we are unreasonable, morbidly sensitive, suspicious, and even spiteful, and if this has brought about some severance, we must heed our Master's counsel—"Leave there thy gift before the altar . . . first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." So that this duty of friendliness is not at variance with worship, but is preparatory to it.

3. Again, true friendship is a source of sympathy, and most of us have times when we need it. It has been said that adversity is the touchstone of friendship. It proves its quality, whether good or bad. The great Roman orator, Cicero, once said, "*Amicus certus in re incerta cernitur*," which may be roughly rendered, "A friend is recognised as one for certain when things are uncertain with you." He is best known when most needed. Suppose, for example, that you are less prosperous than you were, and you find it necessary to cut down expenses and move into a smaller house, and have the pluck to do this in the neighbourhood where you have been known when well-to-do. You know what happens. Your "acquaintance," who was friendly enough when you met, and who was sometimes glad to come to your house, will pass you by on the other side, to all appearances immersed in his own thoughts, or absorbed in talk with some one else.

But your "friend," because he is a friend, a gentleman, and not a snob, sees you on the platform, walks towards you, passes many well-to-do folk with a nod, and gives you a grip of the hand, with a hearty greeting which others cannot fail to notice, and you say to yourself, "Thank God he is loyal, and I know he would help me if he could; anyhow, he has given me new heart and new hope." A friend loveth at all times, and becomes a brother in adversity. And if you are a true follower of Him Who loved us in our weakness, and misery, and sin, Who from heavenly heights came down to the lowest level, you will never forsake your friend because he has gone down in the world. When he is out in the storm you will walk over the very waves to bring him cheer. "Thine own friend and thy father's forsake not." His trouble is a test to you, as well as to him. There are fruits which fall when the blast sweeps through the trees, but they are generally those which are rotten at the core.

4. Well, we have spoken of human friendships, for which we may well thank God. But let us not forget that "there is a Friend which sticketh closer than a brother." He is unseen, but He is near. He is perfect, yet He is pitiful. He is heavenly, but He is human. How often have we sung that familiar verse which contains, in its simple phraseology, a truth whose depths we have never sounded yet!

“One there is, above all others,
Well deserves the name of Friend ;
His is love beyond a brother’s,
Costly, free, and knows no end :
They who once His kindness prove,
Find it everlasting love.”

And God is in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, proffering, in His infinite condescension, friendship to us. Abraham was known as the “Friend of God”; God spoke to Moses as a “man speaks unto his friend,” and that, which seemed to be only possible to elect souls, has been made natural to us all through the incarnation of the Son of God in the Man of Nazareth, the Friend of sinners. For Jesus loved Peter and John and Mary and Martha, and others like them, people imperfect, wayward, and sinful as ourselves. And in Him, thank God, we have found a Friend worthy of implicit confidence, constant in His sympathy and affection. To Him we tell each day the secrets of our souls; in every grief and joy we are certain of His sympathy. Distance and even death will make no severance between us, nay, death will only bring us into closer fellowship when He fulfils the promise which no one else could make: “I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am ye may be also.” His friendship is like the evening shadow which deepens and broadens as the sun is nearer to its setting, and in the dawn of a better day we shall

see Him as He is. "Having loved His own who are in the world, He loves them to the end." This is no exclusive privilege ; it is proffered to every one, whatever the past has been. Indeed, there is but one thing that keeps any of us from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ our Lord, and the prophet tells us what it is when he says: "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God." Wherefore repent and be converted, turn right round that your sins may be blotted out and the times of refreshing shall come from the Presence and the Friendship of the Lord.

XII

IDEAL BROTHERHOOD

"Christ's faith makes but one Body of all Souls,
And Love's that Body's Soul. . . .
What Soul soe'er in any language can
Speak heaven like hers is my Soul's countryman."

CRASHAW.

"Where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, bondman or freeman : but Christ is all, and in all."—COL. iii. II.

THE gospel of the grace of God is needed by men of all nationalities and of all classes, and from the first it was intended for every one of them. Whether a man be rich or poor, whether he be learned or ignorant, whether he live in the temperate, the torrid, or the arctic zone, he equally requires redemption from sin and the assurance of Divine love. No man ever realised this more than Paul, who fought constantly, strenuously, and sometimes desperately, against any attempt to limit the universality of the gospel, whether it was made by Pharisees, proud of their piety, or by philosophers, contemptuous of the uncultured — "Jews and

Greeks, Barbarians, Scythians, bondmen, freemen all " were welcomed into the ample arms of Christ and of His holy Catholic Church.

And in the Church, at least in the early days of its history, all found a true home, a spiritual brotherhood, where consciousness of God's love overflowed and submerged former distinctions, as by the incoming tide the little pools in the rocks are submerged and united in the sea. The philosopher worshipped side by side with the uncultured ; a former Pharisee like Saul proved himself the brother of a former publican like Matthew. Philemon, the wealthy merchant of Colossæ, sat down at the same Lord's Table with Onesimus his slave, repentant thief as he was. There was no privileged class, no dictatorial official in the Early Church, but a realisation of " liberty, fraternity, and equality," such as no other revolution has ever produced.

This brotherhood met a longing which is innate—it gratified an instinct which is world-wide. In the deepest sense most men are home-sick. They want mothering, and they long for more brotherliness. They are getting tired of struggling against each other in the arena of trade ; and they are revolting more and more against the hideous waste and cruelty of war. They are beginning to see with ever-growing clearness that differences of

race and of nationality ought not to provoke hostility, and that the prosperity of one nation does not necessarily involve loss to another, any more than the success of one member of a family means the impoverishment of his brothers. And still the sigh goes up to heaven that our late Poet Laureate voiced for us years ago—

“Ah ! when shall all man’s good
Be each man’s rule, and universal Peace
Lie, like a shaft of light across the land?”

The Church of Christ has failed in many ways: in its defence of the poor, in its proclamation of the gospel to all the world, in its freedom from worldliness, but perhaps most of all in its presentation to the world of an all-embracing brotherhood, in which the children of God are bound together in mutual and Divine affection. With this result—that men without belief in the Divine Fatherhood, with no thought of the great Elder Brother Who is the Redeemer and King of the race as well as its Ideal, are seeking to gain, by lower means, a brotherhood which can only be abiding, as it is inspired by Divine love. The end arrived at by Communism and Socialism is right; but, apart from religious motive, the means used to reach it are utterly inadequate. Into such movements therefore let us seek to infuse the Spirit of Christ, that the

Church may be the leader, and not the opponent of all that tends to the establishment of the human brotherhood, in which "Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim."

At present even in Europe we see what is little better than a Christless civilisation, which can scarcely be a subject of envy to shrewd heathen people like the Chinese and the Japs. Our military preparations in Christendom for a war which ought never to come, are crippling productive energy in all directions, and wasting national resources as much as if we poured hundreds of millions every year into the sea; and the Conference at the Hague has done next to nothing to stay this wicked waste of life and of treasure. Meanwhile the poor are getting poorer, and vast silent multitudes, whom Christ died to save, are degraded and miserable almost beyond hope. Surely the sight of such misery ought to stay our fratricidal hands. Who does not remember (if he has ever read it) the story in *Helen's Babies* which the uncle tells to his little nephew Budge. It runs thus:—During the civil war in America two troops of horse approached each other from the Federal and Confederate armies. Suddenly aware of each other's presence, both made ready for the charge. But a little fellow who had been picking blackberries in the woods, at the critical moment ran

across the road, stumbled and fell between the two bodies of armed men, and burst out crying. An officer cried out "halt," and bugles blew; every horse stopped, and one soldier jumped down and picked up the boy, and tried to comfort him. Then a soldier from the other side came up to look at him, and more gathered round the crying child and they all fraternised, for, as one of them said, "We did not feel like fighting just then." Whether that is fact or fancy I do not know. But it is precisely what we want on a large scale; such pity for the weak and poor who are helpless brethren, that war may cease, even to the ends of the earth.

It is on the brotherhood of man, which the Church has so largely failed to represent and advance, that I wish to give you a few further thoughts.

I

Our text implies that this brotherhood is hindered by certain distinctions and divisions. Those mentioned are suggestive. Consider them.

1. The Greek and the Jew represent national distinctions. They differed in race, in language, in customs and tendencies. Now a racial distinction is not of human origin, still less of Satanic. It is Divine; for "God hath made of one

blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath appointed the bounds of their habitation"—giving to one the ruggedness of the north, to another the sunny climes of the south; to one the environment of the sea, to another the wealth of the plain; that each may develop its own character and fulfil its own destiny—all together constituting the varied but loving family of God.

2. "The circumcision and the uncircumcision," spoken of next, represents those who are separated by forms and ceremonies; and very often hostility has been more provoked by these than by nationality. How bitter the strife has been over the meaning of the Sacraments, for example, as if a different view of them involved a different fate in the future world—though we may be sure that no soul will be condemned by the Just Judge for a neglect of mere forms, or for a misunderstanding of them. For, as we sometimes sing—

"But we make His love too narrow
By false limits of our own;
And we magnify His strictness
By a zeal He will not own."

3. The "barbarian and Scythian" do not constitute another antithesis as the other phrases do. It is a climax, for of all barbarians the "Scythians" were regarded as the most savage and hopeless

But, by the cultured Greeks, profound contempt was cherished towards other races than their own. They always thought and spoke of them as "barbarians," a feeling which the clever but heretical teachers in Colossæ would do their best to foster. Learning ought to enlarge one's sympathies, but it by no means does so, as a rule—and there is no arrogance more offensive than that of the cultured towards the ignorant. If you want examples you have only to look at the treatment of natives not only on the Congo but in Africa generally, or in India, in Madagascar, or the South Seas, by the representatives of cultured and civilised Christendom. One would hardly suppose that these were of the same blood or belonged to the same God.

4. "Bondmen and freemen" are still to be found. Happily the awful gulf which in those days existed between masters and slaves is narrower and shallower than it was. Yet there is much in the relationships of employer and employed—of capital and labour, which is absolutely contrary to the Christian idea of brotherhood. They refuse to meet on equal terms, they are careless of each other's interests, and are often separated in sentiment as if they belonged to hostile camps, and not as though they were in the same family.

Such then are the barriers between men mentioned here by Paul. They existed then

and in a modified form they exist now; but this far-seeing apostle, illumined by the Spirit of God, had a vision of the Christ, Who is Son of Man and Son of God, calling men from all these hostile and opposing conditions to Himself, fulfilling the ancient prophecy—"Unto Him shall the gathering of all people be"—or to use His own words—"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me"—and Christ shall be all, and in all.

II

The apostle implies that nothing short of Christ Himself will bring out the true brotherhood—and history shows that it has never been reached by the use of merely human means.

1. Trade, for example, does not succeed in producing this, even if this were its aim, which it is not. I am old enough to remember the Exhibition of 1851: and, child as I was, I could understand the high hopes which were then entertained—about the end of wars and the establishment of universal peace; because nations would learn that they were dependent on each other, and that by the exchange of products between them, we should soon see what I may call "the United States of Europe." But though our mutual dependence is greater and more widespread than ever, it has never had that

effect. Indeed, what woeful wars have desolated the world since then! Our own war with Russia in the Crimea—the deadly conflict between Federals and Confederates in the United States—the defeat of Austria by Prussia—the campaign of Napoleon the Third nominally on behalf of Italy, and his overthrow in bloody conflict by what is now united Germany,—all these, apart from wars with people outside Christendom, have taken place among so-called Christian nations, who profess to obey the Prince of Peace, and like all other wars they have settled nothing on a basis of righteousness, or on a basis which is really durable.

2. Well, much the same is true within the Church also. Think of the creeds we have formulated and tried to enforce. How often some loudly advertised eirenicon has been tried, which was supposed to bring all together in harmony, and to exclude all heresy, but it has failed always and everywhere. Surely it is time we learnt that neither by subjugating men by force of arms, nor by silencing men by authoritative utterances, can we secure freedom from quarrel and discord. As one of our great statesmen said, "Force is no remedy." What we want to see is not a Europe which would be like a gaol full of prisoners or like a monastery full of submissive monks, but like a home filled with brothers who really care for each other.

And this means a change of feeling, a victory of love over selfishness such as none but Christ incarnated, and none but He can inspire. All the evils which accompany natural divisions will be abolished, if only His Spirit prevails. Just as the hideous enormous creatures who once wallowed in the slime died out, as the earth dried and the climate changed, and the land became ready for the reception of man, so all evils will vanish, when the world's moral climate is changed from one of selfishness to one of love. Then shall be fulfilled the poem-prophecy I love to quote—

“Each Christian nation shall take upon her
 The law of the Christian man in vast ;
 The crown of the giver shall fall to the donor,
 And last shall be first, and first shall be last,
 And to love best shall be to reign unsurpassed.”

III

Observe that this brotherhood, now disturbed by divisions, and always proved to be impossible of human manufacture, is the ideal of God, and will ultimately come about as His creation.

If you will, at your leisure, study the verses preceding my text, and which deal with preparation for its fulfilment, you will see that Paul

insists upon a transformation of character, which he declares comes from life in Christ. Just as the human home, in its ideal state, springs from mutual love between two people, so the Christian brotherhood originates in the love of Christ to the Christian, and of the Christian to Christ. Brothers in the same family differ from one another in appearance, in tastes, in capacities, in success, but they rejoice and they sorrow together, because they are of one blood and belong to one family.

As Keble puts it—

“No distance breaks the tie of blood,
Brothers are brothers evermore,
Nor wrong, nor wrath of deadliest mood
That magic may o’erpower :
Oft ere the common source be known,
The kindred drops will claim their own,
And throbbing pulses silently
Move heart towards heart by sympathy.

So is it with true Christian hearts ;
Their mutual share in Jesus’ blood
An everlasting bond imparts
Of holiest brotherhood.
Oh ! might we all our lineage prove,
Give and forgive,—do good and love,—
By soft endearments in kind strife
Lightening the load of daily life ! ”

But what is to “share in Jesus’ blood”? Yes, that is the secret of it—“their mutual share in Jesus’ blood.” It is not a belief in His atonement, though

I believe in that—it is sharing the life of Jesus ; for, as the old phrase has it, “ the blood is the life.”

That life comes through the faith which takes hold on Him, which unites us to Him, so that His Spirit pours through our nature, as the sap of the trunk pours through the branches of the vine. Dear brothers, do you know anything of that in happy experience? Are you in vital union with Him? Is He living over again in you, so that it is no more you who live, but Christ Who is living in you? These are the things which matter. Not the creed you profess, not the denomination you belong to, not the form of worship you prefer, but your relation to Christ, Who died to put away your sin, and lives in you to cast out the last relics of its power. Take home, then, to yourselves the exhortation with which this chapter begins : “ If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things that are above.” And heed what follows in the 5th and 8th verses: “ Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth ” ; and, “ Now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.” For it is this moral change which Paul regards as evidence of life in Christ. He assumes as an essential in every Christian experience that we have thus put off the old man “ with his deeds, and have put on ” the new man ; for only thus can Christ be all and in all.

And we are to judge ourselves not by our emotions or even by our beliefs, but by the habits of thought and conduct, which are formed by the life within.

And what is habit? Habit is the vesture of the soul which it puts on here, and will wear hereafter. The figure is a frequent one in the Bible: "Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness" is a prayer of the Psalmist. And our Lord speaks of the man clad in the wedding garment, who alone is welcome to the feast of the king; while Paul urges us to put off habits, which are of the darkness, and to put on the armour of light. That word "habit" means "custom," and it also means "costume"; and it well denotes what we put on—what we are known by and will be judged by. The conversion may be sudden, and often is; but this moral change is gradual. Hence it is that Paul uses, in the 10th verse, a tense which is lost in the A.V., but happily restored in the R.V.—where we do not read, "the new man is renewed," but, "the new man is *being* renewed"; for the process is not complete, but is continuing under the daily impetus of the Holy Spirit.

And the ideal brotherhood will be reached at last by those who have thus put off, as if they were filthy garments, "anger, wrath, and malice"; for those who do this are one in life and one in habit,

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members of one family, in which Christ Jesus is the Elder Brother and the one Ideal.

And in proportion as this is so with each of us, we shall be brotherly in spirit, caring for each other, rejoicing with each other, standing by one another, as brothers of one family. Then distinctions between us will not be antagonisms; but each will bring his own special characteristic and gift to Him, the one Lord Jesus Christ, Who is "all and in all," Whose are all riches and powers. Then differences of nationality and language, of creed and form, of wealth and poverty, will no more impede the flow of universal love, than the ridges of the ribbed sand keep back the rolling in of the sea.

"Like a mighty army moves the Church of God !
Brothers, we are treading where the saints have trod ;
We are not divided, all one body we,
One in hope and doctrine, one in charity."

In the spirit of that refrain may we all march
heavenward !

XIII

THE CLAIMS OF OUR COLONIES

"One standard floats above us ;
One old historic throne,
In nearness or in distance,
One loyal faith we own ;
So in the things eternal
Adore we at one shrine,
And with the nation's banner
Bear we the Church's sign."

S. J. STONE.

"And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with Me from the beginning."—ST. JOHN xv. 27.

OUR Lord had just been speaking about the Spirit of Truth, who in all ages testifies of Him, in the thoughts He inspires and the emotions He quickens. Then turning to His disciples He adds, "*Ye also* shall bear witness." Their witness-bearing, however, is not separate from that of the Spirit, nor independent of it. It is essentially the same—the human side of the Divine work. For every Christian is a fresh incarnation, not (as some suppose) as the result of his creation as a man, but

as the result of his re-creation, being "born again of water and of the Spirit." In other words, the Spirit of Truth speaks to the world both directly and indirectly—directly in conscience, in holy impulse, in true thought; and indirectly through the characters and the service of those thus inspired. Therefore, to all true followers of His, our Lord still says, "Ye also shall bear witness."

The Twelve were peculiarly prepared to testify of Jesus because they had "been with Him from the beginning." They had known His teaching and seen His miracles, and appreciated His character from the very commencement of His ministry. With all confidence, therefore, they could say, as John does in his first epistle, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you." The fact that they had seen, constituted both the call and the fitness for witness-bearing. This indicates a law in the kingdom of our Lord. Responsibility is imposed upon us by the experience we have enjoyed. If Christianity has for us thrown light on dark problems, if it has brought us forgiveness of sins and hopes of heaven; if it has raised us from despondency or from degradation, then love to our fellows demands from us its propagation.

This is true of the individual Christian, and it is true also of every Church, and of every nation over whose character and destiny Christianity has

exercised beneficent sway. And this is pre-eminently true of our own country, whose welfare has been largely and directly due to the religion of Jesus Christ. Too often we forget that this has been the underlying force which has originated or controlled our best national movements. We fail to realise the truth of Mrs. Browning's phrase: "Civilisation perfected is fully developed Christianity." The makers of England have largely been the servants of Christ; and liberty, justice, and righteousness will be maintained and enlarged as we are true to the principles of the faith we profess. I believe in the essential truth which underlies those lines of Wordsworth, which run—

"Ungrateful country, if thou e'er forget
 The sons who for thy civil rights have bled!
 But these had fallen for profitless regret,
 Had not thy holy Church her champions bred,
 And claims from other worlds inspirited
 The star of Liberty to rise. Nor yet
 (Grave this within thy heart) if spiritual things
 Be lost through apathy, or scorn, or fear,
 Shalt thou thy humbler franchises support,
 However hardly won or justly dear:
 What came from heaven to heaven by nature clings,
 And if dissevered thence, its course is short."

Now we English Christians, who from the beginning of our history have known something of the blessings brought into this world by Christianity, have special responsibilities for its spread. This

is partly due to such facts as these: our sons and daughters are more widely scattered than those of any other race; our commerce brings us into more or less intimate relations with men of other nations; and our representatives control the destiny of millions who have no faith, or a false faith. For good or for evil, English-speaking people, in the persons of merchants, sailors, soldiers, colonists, and officials, are the most conspicuous representatives of Christianity to those without it, and if only all these were intelligent and effective witness-bearers for Christ, His Kingdom would speedily be triumphant. Dr. Arnold therefore was quite right when he said in regard to India, "Remember that the great work to be done is to organise and purify the Christian Churches of whites and half-castes." The principle applies everywhere, and when Jesus spoke of bearing witness He did not refer only to direct speech and recognised missionary enterprise, but to the silent and powerful influence exercised by the lives of those who had been with Him from the beginning.

It is this truth which I wish now specially to apply to our duty as Christians towards our Colonies. What is a colony? A colony, as distinguished from a "dependency" like India, may be defined as a body of people formed by migration,

who are still under the protection and attached to the supreme government of the mother country. The Greeks, for example, were a spreading people, but they did not form what we call "colonies." These originated with the Romans, whose organising genius made every district where their citizens settled an integral part of the empire. It was they who set the example which we have followed, with such conspicuous success, of appointing their foremost men to be representatives and rulers; consuls and praetors, for example, to be pro-consuls and pro-praetors—and it was they who set a limited term to the authority of every such representative ruler in order to avert the danger of his claiming independence. Our Colonies are a part of our Empire. We are responsible for them. Their inhabitants are our representatives, our fellow-citizens, our own kith and kin, and what they are will largely mould the character and destiny of the nations and empires of the future. What the United States are to-day, Canada, for example (which has a still larger area than they cover), will probably become; and as this is the formative period with the people of that dominion, we cannot overrate the importance of saturating them now with Christian influences.

I am not here to justify or even excuse the methods by which many of our vast possessions

have been gained. Unprovoked aggression, unjust wars, and cruel trickery have too often played a disgraceful part in the making of our Empire. Nevertheless I feel sure that when God gave this earth to the children of man, He intended us to make the best use of it; to sow and reap, to toil and delve in its soil, and not allow it to be desolated by tribal wars, or to be wasted by idleness and neglect. Like all other commands, obedience to this brings tremendous temptations, and under the power of some of them we have shamefully fallen. The Aborigines in Australia, and the people on the Congo, are examples of the ways in which weaker nations are exploited by the stronger, and of the horrors which follow greed of gain and brutal violence. In spite of all this wrong-doing, I hold that the over-peopled lands are intended to pour forth their surplus population, as we have done in our Colonies; that the national spirit of adventure, seen in our pioneers and explorers, is divine in its source; and that the power for rule brings with it responsibility for ruling, in the fear of God always. It is therefore in the providence of God, I believe, that British people possess vast areas of land to be used for His glory, and multitudes of people whom we must strive to rule in His name and bring to His feet. We should pray on behalf of the nation for a deeper sense of responsibility, for a wider,

freer use of opportunity, and that our greed, and boastfulness, and pride may be overwhelmed in the thought of our accountability both to man and to God.

“God, being so great, great gifts most willingly imparts ;
But we continue poor that have such narrow hearts.”

Now, limiting our thoughts to our Colonies for a few minutes, let us try to realise some of their moral perils and their religious disabilities. For the most part they are countries where the effort to get on in the world is so absorbing that materialism becomes even more rampant than in the old country. Mental and religious culture is also at a serious discount, for men are estimated far too much there as well as here for their pushfulness, their enterprise, and their worldly success.

Besides this, our Colonists necessarily mingle with men of other nations, whose moral standards are lower, and whose religious upbringing has been unlike their own, and this sometimes has a disastrous effect. Such cosmopolitanism is hostile to the faith of the fatherland. Take, for example, a city like Winnipeg, where, on the Sunday I spent in it, religious services were conducted in twenty-seven distinct languages ; though the majority of the people were attending no place of worship at all. Coming as they do from free-

thinking France, from Catholic Spain, from degraded Russia, and from heathen lands, is it any wonder that our young fellows fresh from home have their religious convictions weakened and their religious observances swept away? Or if one of them finds himself on some lonely ranch, with his nearest neighbour a dozen miles away, deprived of any chance of a religious service, what danger there is of his forgetting that one day in the week is sacred, a day of which many in the homeland can sing—

“Day of all the week the best,
Emblem of Eternal rest.”

I thank God that such temptations have been triumphed over by many, and this is due largely to the remembrance of early training in a Christian home, and to the influence of letters regularly sent from loved ones left behind. The observance of Sunday, for example, in Winnipeg and in Vancouver, in spite of the newness and rawness of their civilisation and the extraordinary racial differences existing, was a marvel to me,—and it is due to the fact that the early settlers, who by their strength of character and conviction gave a stamp to the whole community, were God-fearing men from Sabbath-keeping Scottish homes. If you have read any of the books written by my friend, “Ralph Connor”—*The Man from Glengarry*

or *The Sky Pilot*, for example—you will at once recognise this truth. It is the very opposite of what you see in Johannesburg, where the tone given to city life comes chiefly from money-seeking, unpatriotic, irreligious men. You have only to study the history of modern communities to learn how much depends on the nucleus round which the earlier emigrants gather. Compare, for example, the Pilgrim Fathers of New England or the Scotsmen of Western Canada with the convicts of Tasmania and the foreign mine-owners of the Transvaal, and see the outcome of each.

We have therefore to do all that lies in our power to impart, to strengthen, and to develop religious principles in those who constitute the nuclei of these nascent nationalities.

They have claims upon us of the strongest kind. Some of them are our own kith and kin. Ay, some of our own boys and girls have gone out there, many of them, thank God, pure in heart, clean in life, and noble in ideal; but they are still needing our prayers, and such provision as we have power to make for their religious life.

There are those amongst us too who have business relations with the Colonies, and derive no small part of their income from commercial associations with them; and not only these, but all who welcome teams of athletes from South

Africa, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand; and all who shouted themselves hoarse over Colonial contingents which fought beside our soldiers, ought surely to do what in them lies for the social and religious betterment of the lands they represent.

We Congregationalists are trying to do something in this direction through the Colonial Missionary Society, of whose Committee I am Chairman, so that I know whereof I speak. In cases of Church difficulty we are constantly appealed to for help. We select ministers suitable for the vacant spheres; we aid in starting and supporting Christian Churches in some sparsely inhabited districts; and recently we challenged the Canadian Churches to make an effort to relieve themselves of what seemed a hopeless incubus of debt, with the result that at the present time every Congregational Church in the Dominion is set "free to serve," and open up new work in those North-West Provinces, whose wealth and population are increasing by leaps and bounds.

I have given you reasons for acknowledging that our Colonists have claims upon us as our own relations, and as those bound to us by the ties of business, and by loyalty to the same throne. But to us, as Christians, the claim comes with increased force. Paul once confessed (and Paul still stands

head and shoulders above all his modern critics both as example and teacher), "I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians; both to the wise and to the unwise." We have more reason to say of our Colonial brethren, "We too are debtors."

The truth is that the very nature of human society binds men together in bonds of mutual responsibility. We are all dependent on each other's ministrations. But for the corn and cattle of other lands, England would starve; but for the men and women our Colonies receive from us, they would soon cease to be what they are. It is but an extension of what we learn in our homes from our earliest years. The babe depends on love; the aged rest in tender ministries; and every one of us through life is enriched by the service of others. And what is true of the family is true of the nations. Our own freedom was not wrought out by our own hands, but by the heroism and sacrifice of our fathers; we are to do for those who come after us what was done for us by those who lived before us. We cannot pay back to our predecessors, but we can enrich our successors, and we are bound thus to pay to posterity in some form, if we would be honest. Every man ought to see to it that he gives back to the world at least as much as he receives

from it. I do not mean in money, but in affection, in sympathy, and in patriotism, which may assume that form, and many other forms besides.

This responsibility will be recognised by each of us in proportion to his nobility of character. Our faults diminish our sense of it. If we are proud we shall resent this claim, and if we are weak we shall ask, "What does the world owe us?" not, "What do we owe to the world?" But if we are penitent of sin we shall long to do something to set evil things right, and if we are grateful to God we shall ever listen to the question, "How much owest thou unto the Lord?"

Is it not more blessed to give than to receive? Is it not more divine? Does not God always pour forth lavishly His gifts upon His creatures; and not least on this world, though it has fallen? Nay, did not Christ, Whom we profess to love and serve, pour forth His life for the world, and thereby teach us that we should no longer live to ourselves?

It is of the very essence of Christianity that we should be conscious of the claims of others—and seek to meet them in the spirit of the Master. It is when we think of what He did and sacrificed for men, that we begin to understand the incalculable worth of one human soul. Apart from this, men may seem hardly worth saving or help-

ing; for every philanthropist has times of disappointment, and almost of despair.

But those distant from us, those seemingly beneath us, acquire new dignity when one remembers that they were worth the sacrifice of God's dear Son, and are destined to immortality. It is the realisation of this which has brought about, and will again bring about, a brotherhood such as the world hopes for, and failing to see it in the modern Church, turns away sick with hope deferred. It was when the Early Church felt, and yielded to, the influence of Christ's Spirit, that "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul, neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own: but they had all things common." And it is that spirit which is ultimately to bind together in one body all men and all nations, till angels shall rejoice over the happy family of God redeemed from selfishness and sin—

"For as material life is planned
That even the loneliest one must stand
Dependent on his brother's hand ;—
So links more subtle and more fine
Bind every other soul to thine
In one great brotherhood divine."

XIV

A PLEA FOR MISSIONS

“It is not enough *not* to do ; you are bound to *act*.”

MAZZINI.

“And Jesus said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.”—ST. MARK xvi. 15.

I N the margin of the Revised Version we read that the passage in which this verse occurs is not to be found in the two oldest Greek Manuscripts. But the command is one which Matthew also records, and with greater fulness. Besides which it is in accordance with the whole genius of the gospel, and with the practice of the Early Church, which so quickly conquered the then civilised world. Indeed, such a command would follow as a necessary sequent on the great commands that we are to love God with all our hearts, and to love our neighbours as ourselves; and it implies the human effort which must be put forth, if ever there is to be a Divine answer

to the prayer of our Lord: "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven." There can be no question then, that we have in my text the command of our Lord Himself.

The fact that our great Commander—Who is invisible, yet near—has given us this as our marching order, ought of itself to suffice as a motive for obedience. Authority I know is at a discount in the present day, not only in the world, but in the Church; not only among the awakened peasants of Russia, but among the intelligent and enterprising people of our own land. And for many professing Christians it seems an insufficient inspiration to interest in foreign missions, that our Lord has bidden us undertake them—though woeful will be the awakening by and by of wicked and slothful servants, who hid their talents in the earth and ignored the fact that their Master would come to take an account of His servants, till it was too late to obey His command.

But our Lord's command would be emphasised, if only we knew the condition of those who live in the darkness of heathenism, and it is precisely because missionaries do know this—as we do not—that when they return on furlough they speak with a passionate earnestness which stay-at-home Christians can hardly understand. Dark superstitions and incredible vices, customs which make

life a misery, and sorrows which find no solace in idolatry, would surely arouse us to some pity if only we knew more about them. We should sympathise then with that poor Chinese woman in hospital of whom Mrs. Owen of Wuchang told us, who, when she heard of Jesus the all-merciful Saviour, said: "I am forty-five years old, and I never heard this good news before I came into this hospital. Why does the Lord Jesus love you English women so much, and not love us a little bit?" She had to be told it was not His love that failed, but ours.

I think that professing Christians, when they try to throw cold water on the fires of missionary enthusiasm, too often forget that the Christianity which has made Britain the power it is did not spring to life in this country, was not indigenous to its soil. It came hither at first as an exotic, transplanted by the hands of foreigners. In other words, our ancestors were heathen, and the country was Christianised and civilised by missionaries from afar, who were as much strangers to England as Englishmen are to Papuans; and who would not have come hither at all but for the zeal inspired in them by Him Who said: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." Our realisation of our debt to those early missionaries of the Cross, and to Him Who sent

them, ought not only to shame scornful words into silence, but should inspire us with such fervour that we shall transform our gifts into sacrifices, and our criticisms into prayers.

I am jealous for some of you—the nominal followers of the Saviour of all men—lest you fail to share in the blessedness of His coming kingdom, for you are doing little or nothing to spread it. Whether we are slothful or eager, whether we are in the gloom of indifference or the gleam of the heavenly day, the purpose of God will be fulfilled.

“While ye sit idle, do ye think
The Lord’s great work sits idle too?
That light dare not o’erleap the brink
Of morn, because ’tis dark with you?
Though yet your valleys skulk in night,
In God’s ripe fields the day is cried,
And reapers with their sickles bright
Troop, singing, down the mountain side.”

In the day of God’s harvest will you stand among the reapers?

I wish to give you some reasons for believing that the time is ripe for the carrying out of our Lord’s purpose. In the Bible we often read about the “fulness of time,” about “times and seasons which the Father hath put in His own power And these phrases do not mean that an arbitrarily appointed year has dawned after the lapse of a

certain number of centuries, but rather this—that a season suited for what God proposes is at hand. In grace, as in nature, fruit ripens, and, if not gathered at the right time, it will rot. It is in this sense, I believe, that God's season for the evangelisation of the world is *now*.

I

If you compare our own times with any of those mentioned in history, you will see that the world is ready for the spread of the gospel as it never was before.

1. Think how, within the memory of the seniors among us, the world has been explored. The blanks which occurred in the maps of Africa, America, and Australia, which we noticed as children, have disappeared from the atlases our children study; and nothing is left to be discovered of the earth's surface except the uninhabitable districts of ice and snow which guard inviolate the southern and northern poles.

2. Picture to yourselves, you older men and women, the sparse and costly means of communication—which you knew as boys and girls, or heard about from your fathers—with the means open to us now, and you will see how marvellously God has been knitting together all the nations,

so far as material appliances are concerned, and making them mutually dependent. For a few shillings you can get into communication with a friend at the Antipodes, or a tourist office in London will arrange for you to travel in safety and comfort right round the world in less than a year. Commerce is boldly availing itself of this changed condition of things, and the Church must do the like, on a scale grander and more far-reaching than has yet been dreamed of. Civilisation is spreading far and wide, and if Christianity does not go with it, England will have the curse of Meroz who went not up to the help of the Lord against the mighty. Think of Japan, now our popular ally, who not so long ago was spoken of with contempt. There was terrible reproach latent in the witty saying of the Japanese Ambassador, which was to this effect: "When Japan was only known for her artistic taste she was despised; but when she learned to kill men with the modern appliances of war she is respected and honoured." It is sadly true.

Are these nations to receive from Christian people only munitions of war and the material blessings of civilisation, while they are learning nothing of Him Who came to bring peace and hope, purity and truthfulness, to a sin-stricken world? Is Christianity to conquer paganism, or

is paganism to conquer Christianity? Shall we carry to heathen peoples the virtues of our religious faith, or shall heathen peoples pour themselves like a flood over our colonies, and over the world, bringing with them the worse than bestial vices which involved Sodom and Gomorrah in ruin? These are more pressing questions than many imagine. The great highways of commerce will be travelled in both directions; from Christendom to heathendom, and from heathendom to Christendom; and each will carry of its own, in character and habit, either to the world's ruin or to its salvation; and in deciding that momentous question, which shall be victorious? each of us has some power and some responsibility. If professing Christians hold aloof, as many do, from influences which spread the gospel, not only will heathenism continue, but it will spread; and the world, to its horror, may once more see something worse than what was seen when Attila and his Huns broke down the civilisation which mighty Rome had built up. But we believe in a better future—for even if what we call civilisation perish, the nucleus of it—Christianity, will triumph, in new forms perhaps, but in glorious results. May we faithfully discharge our responsibility, believing that the highways of commerce are the highways of God, along which the triumphal

chariot of the world's King shall come! For there are signs, which are nowhere more conspicuous than in the victories gained in realms of heathen darkness, that Longfellow's exultant cry is true—

“Out of the shadows of night
The world rolls into Light;
It is daybreak everywhere.”

II

My second point is that the Church has in it evidence that the fulness of time is near, in spite of much which may well cause heart-searching.

I. There is no doubt that thought has ripened and freedom grown in her. I doubt if the Church of the Middle Ages had much worth taking to heathen lands. The priests in South America, for example, carried from Spain a curse rather than a blessing to people they degraded by tyranny, vice, and superstition. Water can only rise to the level of its source. The tank in your house is the measure of height for the fountain in the garden. There is much indeed to humble us in the vice of many Europeans abroad and in the cruelties of the Congo, and when people sneer at the low moral standard of converts in heathen lands, they would do well to remember that the tone of European officers and traders has a good deal to

do with it. But where the gospel has "free course," the Chinese converts in the Boxer riots, the Madagascar martyrs, the South Sea Island apostles with their splendid heroism, put to shame the dilettante cynicism of many nominal Christians here.

2. And besides the higher ideals of Christ and His Church, which we now have to carry with us, we have learnt from experiment during the last century much which ought to fit us for a broader and nobler missionary work in this century. Women's influence among women, medical work among the diseased, education among children, literature which is now ready for the study of the cultured, are forces on the side of the Church, of which our fathers knew little or nothing. The stage of experiment has passed. What we have tried on a small scale we are ready to do on a far larger scale—and if in gifts and sacrifices the Christian Church will rise to the height of its present opportunity, we may see within the lifetime of some here whole nations brought into the kingdom of Christ.

3. Besides, we are not ignorant of the real condition of the heathen as some of our forefathers were. We can see the evil in their systems of religion, and the element of truth in them which we can make use of; and I call on you, by the

study of Missionary literature, to make yourselves familiar with the facts of the case which are so interesting, and so accessible, that it is a shame and scandal if you continue to be ignorant of them. If the *Missionary Chronicle* took the place of *Ally Sloper*, or even of *Tit-Bits*, with some of you young people, it would develop your intelligence and enlarge your sympathies, so that you would long to avail yourselves of the magnificent possibilities which are opening up before the soldiers of the Cross in your days.

4. Why, the fact is that all the strategic points in the empire of heathenism are in Christian hands, and especially in the hands of Protestants. If all the Christians in Great Britain and the United States were in downright earnest, Paganism and Mohammedanism would be overpowered long before the century is out. But with wealth that is fabulous, Christ's Church is represented in the heathen world so inadequately, that, in comparison with our provision for it, two Christian ministers to evangelise the whole of London would be an arrangement on a larger scale.

III

What is our share of this tremendous responsibility? Have you discharged your share of it?

Or do you hold aloof like cowardly soldiers of the rank and file who allow their officers to fight alone, and call in vain for support. I am not your judge, but God is; and I beg you to think it over for yourselves in His presence. I thank God that some here are zealous in the cause of missions, and according to their power they do give, work, and pray. But how small is their number compared with those who are indifferent, or doubtful, or even cynical? How completely we are put to shame by that small society of Christians known as Moravians, of whom no less than twenty-five thousand have gone out as missionaries. Indeed, when a convert joins them, the question is asked, "Do you intend to be a missionary? If not, what sum do you propose to contribute towards the support of a substitute?" Have you ever considered such questions? If not, will you do so now, and give the answer to God, and then to the Church?

I wish I could meet the secret objections some of you raise to this work of world evangelisation; for you never avail yourself of the chance of hearing the evidence given on its behalf by intelligent, cultured, consecrated men and women, who from time to time speak at a missionary meeting. Why, some of you have never been to a missionary meeting in your lives; have never read through a missionary report, or even a missionary magazine, and yet

you sit in judgment on missions, with as little fitness for the task as would be mine if I gave a lecture on the intricacies of the money market. Let me suggest and try to answer some of your objections.

1. Perhaps you say to yourself, "Well, after all, the heathen are in the hands of a merciful God." It is true, blessed be His name. Your children, too, are in the hands of a merciful God when they are ill; but does that prevent you from sending for the doctor? The shipwrecked crew clinging to broken bits of timber are in the hands of a merciful God, but you would be one of the first to help launch the lifeboat to save them.

2. You urge that the heathen have their own religion, and it must serve them, for it is as "good for them as Christianity is good for Western nations." But I have already reminded you that Christianity did not originate in the West, but in the East, and if it is carried to those lands, it will do for them in the twentieth century what it did in the first. I do not say that those who never heard the gospel will perish like those who have rejected it: for "the Gentiles which have not a law are a law unto themselves"—but I do say that this in nowise lessens our responsibility for obeying Christ's command, and spreading abroad the light of the knowledge of the glory of

God, which we have seen in the face of Jesus Christ.

“The partial light men have,
My creed persuades me, well-employed may save ;
While he that scorns the noonday beam, perverse,
Shall find the blessing unimproved a curse.”

Christianity is not a national religion, it is not tribal, it is not racial, it is a world religion. With an authority we dare not question, the voice of the eternal, universal Father says, “Thou shalt have none other gods beside Me,” and with the same authority God Incarnate in Jesus Christ says, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.” If we realised what His salvation really means, if we saw sin in the light He saw it, Who sent His Son to redeem us from it, not one of us would hold aloof. We should not begrudge our contributions of money, especially when we think of those who have not counted their lives dear to them. Not one of us would dare to say to an enthusiastic missionary what Festus said to Paul, “Thou art beside thyself”; but we should be ready to take our stand beside God’s ambassador in spirit, and say with Paul, “Whether we be beside ourselves it is to God . . . for the love of Christ constraineth us.” In the light of my text then, let me ask you to accept and think over the

motto which is inscribed on the door of a preaching place in Chik Ballapur—

“One God for all mankind ;
One Saviour for every sinner ;
One Brotherhood for all races ;
One law of Duty for every man.”

And our present duty lies in obedience to this command, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.”

XV

GOD'S RECOMPENSE TO GIVERS

"Give all thou canst ! High Heaven rejects the lore
Of nicely calculated less or more."

WORDSWORTH.

"Give, and it shall be given unto you ; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they give into your bosom. For with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again."—ST. LUKE vi. 38 (R.V.).

THIS utterance of our Lord's is striking and suggestive. It condenses in a brief parabolic verse a principle world-wide in its application. If we look only at the form in which that principle is expressed, it would hardly appear to be true, especially as our Authorised Version substitutes the word "men" for "they" (shall *men* give)—but the word used by our Lord may refer equally to men or to unseen beings, or to natural laws. It cannot be disputed, for example, that many a spendthrift has "given" lavishly to his boon companions, and has received no such return as is promised here. "Men" have taken his gifts and

shared his feasts, but when he has spent all they have not responded to his kindness, but have vanished at the approach of adversity, as swallows take their flight when the touch of autumn comes. When he begins to be in want, no man gives to him. His experience would lead him to substitute for the text some such bitter words as these: "Give, and nothing shall be given to you; not even though you are starving."

It is clear, then, that our Lord was not referring (as our translation implies that He did) to confidence in human justice and gratitude; indeed, His own experience may well assure us of that. For His whole mission on earth was a giving of all that He was, and of all that He had, yet He found no return in love and loyalty, but even to the last was despised and rejected of men. He gave, but "men" did not give back to Him, good measure pressed down, and running over. But we read that because He poured out His soul unto death therefore God gave Him a portion with the great, and this suggests a key to the interpretation of our text, showing that Jesus is referring not to man's law of gratitude, but to God's law of recompense. It presents us with the brighter side of the Divine law of retribution, and with that we are to concern ourselves.

The general truth in this dictum is that accord-

ing to God's good and wise law expenditure brings return, so that when we pour out our love, our gifts, our powers of any kind, these are not wasted, but increased. This is true of living things in the natural world. Have you ever seen the fragile anemones decking the woods in spring, bending to the gentlest breeze, so that they are well named "wind flowers"? Or have you noticed the primroses which in their abundance and beauty make even the prosaic railway embankment look more splendid than the field of the cloth of gold? What brought about that spreading of life so far and wide, that numberless multiplication of things beautiful? It is due to the principle laid down in our text. Each living plant, because it lived, gave forth something of itself and much more was given in return, and thus unsightly things were covered over with flowers, reminding us of Paradise lost and regained.

Our Lord would have us apply this to Christian life and work. I say advisedly to Christian *life*, because it is only where life is that it holds good. If a primrose is blighted and withered before it blossoms it cannot multiply itself, for living seed can only be an outcome of life. Similarly the utterance of dead words, the repetition of formal creeds, the maintenance of lifeless organisations, are unproductive. The Pharisees and Scribes

recited laws which were true enough, and did acts, like almsgiving, which were right enough, and the priests in the Temple performed all things according to the law, but these doings did not increase the number or the fervour of true worshippers, because the Searcher of hearts was compelled to say, "Ye have no life in you." Only life can propagate life, and it is when we share the life of our Lord, and give forth of it unstintingly, in teaching, in gifts, and in prayers, that we shall share the recompense promised here.

"There are loyal hearts, there are spirits brave,
There are souls that are pure and true,
Then give to the world the best you have
And the best will come back to you.

Give love, and love to your life will flow
A strength in your utmost need,
Have faith, and a score of hearts will show
Their faith in your word and deed.

Give truth, and your gift will be paid in kind
And honour will honour meet,
And a smile that is sweet will surely find
A smile that is just as sweet.

For life is the mirror of king and slave,
'Tis just what we are and do ;
Then give to the world the best you have,
And the best will come back to you."

That is the gist of my text.

I

The blessing which comes to a man who puts forth the powers which make him what he is, is exemplified in various spheres of activity.

1. We will begin with what is lowest in our Lord's judgment, though it seems to rank highest in the opinion of multitudes.

If you adventure your capital in some enterprise, you expect it to increase. That is the mainspring of commercial enterprise, in which as a nation we are still well to the front, in spite of all that croakers say. While an Oriental hoards and hides his money, an Englishman turns it over again and again, with the result that the inert people become poor, and the active people rich, for they give, and it is given back to them in full measure.

2. Similarly with physical strength. If you were not in training, and were compelled to pull in a college boat, you would soon be utterly exhausted, while the young athlete, who had been putting forth strength every day, would hardly turn a hair. He has muscles and sinews like iron, as the result of previous exercise. His use of strength has increased it, not diminished it; in other words, he gives, and more is given.

3. How true that is in mental work every student, nay, every schoolboy knows. A child

does not diminish his faculty for acquiring knowledge by using it, but so increases it that he quickly becomes able to undertake higher and harder work. Every teacher and minister has a similar experience. When we began our work we probably thought that half a dozen lessons, or sermons, would use up all that we had to say, but, as a matter of fact, thoughts come more readily, and powers increase more wonderfully, as they are exercised.

4. Is it not so with affections too? A young fellow is apt to be narrow and contracted so long as his affections find a centre in himself. But when he really gives his heart to some one else, and a home grows up around him and little children cluster about his knees, his former vanity and self-absorption pass away, while his tenderness and consideration marvellously develop. His love has grown by the giving of love. He gave, and it has been given him, full measure, pressed down, and running over.

5. The fact is that all living creatures and all communities of living men develop by giving forth of themselves. How was the British Empire built up? If we had kept within the bounds of this little island, and cared merely for comfort and convenience, in what we call a "parochial spirit," where would have been our present greatness?

Instead of this, in a spirit of enterprise that has prevailed for many generations, Britain adventured her wealth in ships which might any day go down in an angry sea. She sent, and still sends forth her sons bravely, though sometimes with tears, to found new settlements in virgin forests and unpeopled plains. And she has freely given of her best men to rule and guide, with wisdom and righteousness, feebler peoples. By thus peopling her Colonies, and risking the lives of her citizens, she lost something, but she gained far more. She gave, and she still gives, but through a commerce which flows back and forth the wide world over, it is given her, full measure, pressed down, and running over.

6. There is not a church, by whatever name it may be known, in which the same law does not hold good. If you, professing Christians, are content to cultivate a dignified ease, a serene self-complacency, thinking that you have adequately served God when you have lolled through a weekly service, if you are unconscious of any responsibility to the miserable and sin-stained around you, and even to the ignorant heathen who are far away from you, then you will lose the sense of our Lord's presence, your own spiritual life will become anæmic, and you will bring on you the curse which ultimately falls on every wicked and slothful servant.

Think then of others in the spirit of the Master Whom you profess to serve. Consider their difficulties and privations, and seek with wisdom and generosity to remove them. Imagine yourself to be in their condition, and ask how you would wish those better off to deal with you. Be amongst them as Jesus was among the miserable and sinful, and remember that you are not your own, but His. And if in His spirit, and for His sake, you serve your own generation, your service of love shall have a reward in deeper joy, in fuller life. Here in memory of your Lord Who gave Himself for you, let me repeat His words once more: "Give, and it shall be given you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they give into your bosom. For with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again."

It cannot be too often insisted upon that our Lord did not put us into His Church to enjoy ourselves, but to serve Him. He charged His disciples by the remembrance of all that had enriched their lives, to be generous to others, saying, "Freely ye have received, freely give." When He fed the hungry folk on the mountain-side, He first asked His own disciples to give up all the provisions they had, in order that these might be shared by others, and then, to their amazement and gratitude, they were able to take up twelve

baskets full. There never was a more extraordinary fulfilment of our text than that, and it was typical. We Christians have that to give which will satisfy the deeper needs of our brethren—the assurance of pardoned sin, of Divine help, and of a heavenly home. Our work is more than exposition of Scripture, and more than kindly visits to the poor; it is to present Christ, Who is God's word to us, God's life for us, and in us, that all may acknowledge Him to be their Lord, to the glory of God the Father. And that is a work worth living for, ay, worth dying for. John Sterling says—

" 'Tis worth a wise man's best of life,
 'Tis worth a thousand years of strife,
 If thou canst lessen but by one
 The countless ills beneath the sun."

But an accepted Christ redeems men, not from "one" ill only, but from *all* ill. He is called Jesus because He shall save His people from their sins.

How few realise their responsibility for helping to enthrone Him. Some in their indolence remain in the Church, in the spirit of Diogenes in his tub, grumbling at passers-by, hoping that they will not cut off the sunshine from their precious persons. Let me beg you all to give forth of yourselves in the belief that you will be enriched in soul, though you may have no visible return for your service.

II

Some elements in that enrichment may be suggested. In the first place, let me remind you that—

I. Some definite Christian work will increase your unselfishness, your decision of character, and your moral greatness. I have known young people interested in the service of the Church who have quietly been invited to do something for others; teaching a junior class, or joining the choir, or collecting for a good cause, and the invitation has set them thinking and often led them to full self-consecration. I know there are some who accept Sunday merely as a day of rest and recreation, and I should like to remind you who thus spend your Sundays, that you are not like beasts of the field fitted only to lie down in green pastures looking with satiated eye on what God has spread around them in nature. You are men and women, endued with varied and marvellous capacities, and are so constituted that some powers become rested through the employment of others. When you turn from business drudgery to wholesome literature or to some pet hobby, you find refreshment by the change. Similarly I beg you to turn from week-day work, when Sunday comes, to service for the King, which includes service to your fellows. Never let it be said that while you

cared much for yourself you cared nothing for God, and nothing for your fellow-men, because that in the Divine judgment is to waste your life.

2. It is another advantage of Christian service that it brings us into associations which are likely to ennoble us, and this also is an element in God's recompense to givers. It is seldom the workers in a church who clothe themselves in a panoply of superciliousness, and complain of want of friendliness. Just as the members of a boat's crew, conscious of the work which they must unitedly do, ignore the distinctions of wealth and rank between them, so Christians occupied in the same service enjoy fellowship. As a rule, the most active church is the most harmonious church, and because it gives forth its strength in the Master's service, it receives back from Him joy and peace within its own borders. And we should pray for the coming of a time when all churches may thus be drawn together, and by their unity of spirit win the victory over evil and thus fulfil the words—

“Then they conquered, in the might
Of their oneness and their right,
Then the will of God was done,
When they all in Christ were one.”

3. It is another advantage to those who give out of the life that is in them that they share their

Lord's Spirit, as they face the sins and sorrows of the world.

We live on a thin crust of civilisation, just beneath which are seething passions which threaten a catastrophe in the moral world, dire as that in the physical world, when Reggio and Messina were shaken by earthquake, and swept away by the sea. To keep ourselves in ignorance of this is a sin against God, but if we are followers of Him Who gave His life for the world, we shall not be hopeless of its salvation. The death-bringing forces of nature are unforeseen and unconquerable by man; but the forces of disorder and crime in the moral world are not unconquerable, only the Church must arouse herself to a consciousness of the world's desperate need of a saving Gospel, and must fearlessly apply its principles, in gift, in influence, and in personal service. The source of all misery is sin, and for its forgiveness and conquest our Lord lived and died and reigns. Selfishness and pride, drunkenness and improvidence, indolence and greed, lie at the root of the evils afflicting modern society. If we dealt with these as we might do, it would be far better than absorbing ourselves in theological controversies and ecclesiastical conflicts. And those who themselves come in contact with their fellows sunk in degradation or misery, who in their own persons

reveal the Saviour from sin, and the King of Righteousness, will not lose their reward.

4. Further, those of us who are thus seeking to give of our best find that prayer is necessary to our continuance and success in it. Anything which will make our lives more devotional should be welcomed, for no rebukes which we receive from others, or administer to ourselves, will conquer prayerlessness. If your child is sullen and silent, your remonstrances or chastisement will have but little effect. But if he has something to do which is only possible with your help, his tongue will be loosened, and you and he will talk to each other about it as father and child should. And there are nominal Christians whose hearts are voiceless towards God, with whom prayer is a mere memory of childhood's days, and not a present reality: but those who truly serve Christ Jesus feel that they *must* speak to Him. Is it not so with some of you? Service lies before you, the very thought of which makes you tremble; you shrink from speaking to one who is godless, or from sacrificing your comfort to meet another's need; and in such seasons of strain you naturally turn to God for help. When Moses was overwhelmed by the sin of the people, he went up into the holy mountain. When Elijah was despondent over his witness-bearing, he listened to the still small voice. When

the disciples felt the tremendous responsibility of assailing the pagan world in the name of their Lord, they met for prayer, until they were endued with power from on high. Pour out your hearts before Him, and God will pour out His blessing on you, in nobler powers, in deeper devotion, and in holier and more effective service. For your own sake, for the world's sake, for Christ's sake, give of your best; and He will enrich you with what is still better, "good measure, pressed down, and running over."

"Give thought, give strength, give deeds, give pelf,
Give love, give tears, and give thyself—
Give, give, be always giving,
Who gives not is not living,
The more we give, the more we live."

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